



## COMMUNITY COUNCIL LIAISON SUB COMMITTEE

### MINUTES OF THE MULTI-LOCATIONAL MEETING HELD IN THE CHAMBER, PENALLTA HOUSE AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON 20<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2023 AT 6.00PM

#### PRESENT:

Councillor T. Heron (Chair)  
Community Councillor J. Rao (Vice Chair)

#### Councillors:

A. Angel, P. Cook, K. Etheridge, A. Gair, T. Heron, D. Ingram-Jones, L. Jeremiah, A. McConnell, J. Winslade, L. Whittle.

#### Community/Town Council Representatives

Aber Valley	Apologies
Argoed	Apologies
Bargoed	- R. Carol
Bedwas, Trethomas and Machen	- K. Ingram and P. Rosser
Blackwood	- G. Edwards-Etheridge
Caerphilly	- Apologies
Darran Valley	- Apologies
Draethen, Waterloo and Rudry	- P. Rosser and K. Ingram (Substitute Member)
Gelligaer	- Apologies
Llanbradach	- Apologies
Maesycwmmmer	- Ms. J. Rao (Vice-Chair),
Nelson	- Mrs. G. Davies. A. Gray (Substitute Member)
New Tredegar	- B. Griffett
Penyrheol, Trecenydd and Energlyn	- H. Treherne
Rhymney	- J. Hughes
Risca East	- P. Leonard,
Risca Town	- T. Davies, B. Campbell (Clerk)
Van	- E. Forehead

#### Together with Officers:-

L. Lane, D. Beecham, J. Davies, L. Rawlings, E. Sullivan, J. Thomas, and A. Jones

**1. TO APPOINT A CHAIR OF THE COMMUNITY COUNCIL LIAISON SUB COMMITTEE FOR THE ENSUING YEAR**

It was moved and seconded that Councillor T. Heron be appointed as Chair of the Community Council Liaison Sub Committee and by show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that Councillor T. Heron be appointed as Chair of the Community Council Liaison Sub Committee.

**2. TO APPOINT A VICE CHAIR OF THE COMMUNITY COUNCIL LIAISON SUB COMMITTEE FOR THE ENSUING YEAR**

It was moved and seconded that Community Councillor J. Rao be appointed as Vice Chair of the Community Council Liaison Sub Committee and by show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that Community Councillor J. Rao be appointed as Vice Chair of the Community Council Liaison Sub Committee.

**3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C. Gordon, R. Chapman, P. Leonard, T. Parry, J.A. Pritchard, C. Thomas, N. George (Cabinet Member) and Town and Community Councils as detailed above.

**4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made at the start or during the course of the meeting.

**5. MINUTES – 24<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2023**

It was moved and seconded that the minutes of the meeting held on the 24<sup>th</sup> July 2023 be approved as a correct record and by a show of hands this was unanimously approved.

RESOLVED that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

**MATTERS ARISING**

Clarification was sought as to the outcome of the Task and Finish Group on Residents Permit Parking. The Community Council Liaison Officer confirmed that the Task and Finish Group enquiries were still ongoing but would bring the report on the outcome back to the Sub Committee for information.

Further information was sought in relation to an action arising from the update on Parking Enforcement and a possible increase from a 1 hour to a 2 hour wait in Nelson. The Community Council Liaison Officer confirmed that the request had been circulated to Highways Infrastructure, however as this change would require an amended Traffic Regulation Order this would take some time.

Further points of clarification were sought in relation to Parking Enforcement and the Community Council Liaison Officer advised the Member that all the data he referenced had been forwarded to all Clerks to share with their Members prior to the last meeting.

## **6. UPDATE ON NO MOW MAY AND GRASS CUTTING REGIMES (PRESENTATION)**

Consideration was given to the presentation which updated the Liaison Sub Committee on the lessons learned from the 2023 'No Mow May' and grass cutting regimes programme.

The Liaison Sub Committee noted how the pandemic lock-down had created an opportunity for wildflowers to bloom enhancing areas that had previously been more manicured in appearance. This period had also facilitated a shift in the expectations and views of the public to grass cutting and the natural environment around them.

As a result, sways of verges were left to flourish encouraging pollinators and insect life to prosper, and the public recognised to need to maintain grass differently. At the same time Welsh Government placed a duty on local authorities to enhance biodiversity and so the Council adopted the 'No Mow May' approach to grass cutting.

The Officer emphasised the need to strike the right balance between grass cutting approaches and were evaluating the methods from a lesson learned perspective. The Liaison Sub Committee noted the staffing, recruitment, and retention issues that the service had faced over the last 12 months and the Officer acknowledged that they had not fully anticipated the extent of the growing season and how the service would cope with the volume of grass, which had led to complaints from the public particularly dog owners. The Officer assured Members that all these comments had been taken on board and he shared positive and negative responses to the No Mow May initiative with the Liaison Sub Committee.

It was noted that a revised approach would be taken in terms of the 2024 cutting season, with housing estates, amenity areas being cut more frequently, and these areas would be monitored to address any concerns. Grass cutting machinery had been updated and further operational changes had been made, which included better informing communities as to why certain area would be cut and uncut. The Council would continue to encourage wildflower growth through its 'nature isn't neat' campaign. The Officer provided further information in relation to the Greener Gwent Partnership and confirmed that a further report on this would be presented to the Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee in December.

Members congratulated the Parks Team for their passion and commitment to biodiversity, but concerns were expressed with regard to long grass during long period of hot/dry weather and the risk of grass fires. The Officer acknowledged the concerns raised and confirmed that areas of growth would be monitored during the summer months and cutting could take place where and when needed.

Members sought assurances that there was now adequate budget resources and staff in place to provide a full grass cutting service and the Officer confirmed that budgeting considerations would be a matter for Members when looking at draft budget proposals early next year. Given the level of savings to be achieved by the Council he could not provide assurances on resourcing.

Members noted the inability of the grass cutting equipment to cope with the volume and length of grass left to flourish and sought assurance that the new equipment referred to by the Officer would be able to tackle this. The Officer confirmed that the service area had invested in the appropriate machines, and this would not be an issue in the 2024 cutting year.

The Officer encouraged Members of the Liaison Sub Committee to contact the Area Parks Team if they had any questions or concerns about grass levels, they would be able to provide updates on grass cutting timetables.

Members expressed concern about the impact on visibility when grass on roundabouts was left uncut. The Officer confirmed that 'bypasses' were cut twice per year, and this would be the same for roundabouts, he again emphasised the need to strike the right balance in terms of biodiversity but assured the Liaison Sub Committee that safety would be the priority.

A Member referenced problems within their own Community Council ward in relation to over-hanging trees. The Officer advised that unfortunately this was not his area of responsibility but if the Member wanted to provide him with further information following the meeting, he would be happy to forward that on to the relevant department to action.

A motion was then moved and seconded that in order to ensure that the grass cutting regimes detailed in the presentation have the necessary resources in terms of both staffing and machinery the Corporate Director for Economy and Environment be written to on behalf of Town and Community Councils to request that should any funding become available as part of the 2024/2025 Budget proposals that consideration be given to this being earmarked for Parks Services. By show of hands this was agreed by the majority present. The Community Council Liaison Officer confirmed that she would take this forward and would copy all Town and Community Councils in on the request.

The Chair thanked the Officer for his attendance and the presentation was noted.

## **7. UPDATE ON THE BOUNDARY COMMISSION COMMUNITY REVIEW (PRESENTATION)**

Consideration was given to the presentation which provided an update on the Boundary Commission Community Council Review.

The Officer outlined the changes proposed by the Boundary Commission and confirmed that full details could be found on the Boundary Commission website and thanked all those Community Councils who had responded as part of the consultation process.

Community Councils expressed their support for the proposed changes and for the Boundary Commission's comments on establishing more Community Councils, which they felt would be a great step forward for this level of local government.

The Clerk of Risca Town Council expressed his Community Council's support for the proposal to amalgamate Risca East and Risca Town Council which was felt to be well overdue.

Representatives from Nelson Community Council sought clarification on the changes to their ward area and the Officer confirmed those to be very minor just a small number of houses in the St. Cattwg area.

The Chair thanked the Officer for his attendance and the presentation was noted.

## **8. BRIEFING NOTE ON MATTERS RAISED BY TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCILS**

Consideration was given to the following items raised by the Town and Community Council Liaison Committee.

### **BUDGET SAVINGS AND BAND D PRECEPT**

The Sub Committee noted the response as circulated to all Clerks.

## **WINTER SERVICE PLAN**

The Sub Committee noted the Winter Service Plan as attached in Appendix 1.

## **ARMED FORCES COVENANT**

Town Councillor George Edwards-Etheridge having tabled the item, thanked Community Councils and local businesses for their attendance and support at the Armed Forces Covenant signing event and asked that more Community Councils consider signing up to the covenant and he actively encourage them to do so to raise greater awareness of armed forces personnel, veterans and their families living in the County Borough.

The Regional Armed Forces Covenant Liaison Officer confirmed that there were 6355 armed forces personnel, veterans and their families living in the area, and she went on to outline her role and how the Covenant sought to raise awareness of veterans and to provide advice and assistance to veterans on things like support with housing, health, and education. Members were advised that CCBC was one of the first Council's to sign up and individual Community Councils and businesses can sign up to the Charter at any time and emphasised that there was no need to wait for the annual event.

Clarification was sought as to how the invitations had been sent to Community Councils, and Councillor Heron as Armed Forces Champion confirmed that emails had been sent to all Clerks about the event and the Covenant.

The Regional Armed Forces Covenant Officer advised that there could have been a breakdown in communication, and she would check her email distribution lists and look to improve on how events such as the signing were communicated going forward.

A Member requested that next time there was an event if it could be highlighted to Community Councils via the Community Council Liaison Officer to ensure that invitations were received. The Community Council Liaison Officer confirmed that she would be more than happy to circulate and to positively highlight the next event. Concerns were expressed about the lack of Community Council involvement and steps that could be taken to increase participation. The Community Council Liaison Officer emphasised the importance of raising the profile of the Covenant in a positive way.

Members debated how best an increase in interest in the Covenant could be achieved and Cllr Edwards-Etheridge in closing the debate emphasised that he had raised the matter to highlight and encourage participation, and to draw attention to the important work the Covenant did for Caerphilly veterans and armed forces personnel.

The Chair thanked all the Officers for their attendance at this evening's meeting and for their contributions.

Meeting ended 7:40pm