

TOWN & COMMUNITY COUNCIL FORUM - MONDAY, 19 MARCH 2018

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE TOWN & COMMUNITY COUNCIL FORUM HELD IN COUNCIL CHAMBER - CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB ON MONDAY, 19 MARCH 2018 AT 16:00

Present

Councillor HJ David – Chairperson

S Aspey	SE Baldwin	Bennett	Bennett
JPD Blundell	MC Clarke	Cllr R Davies	Cllr S Dendy
Cllr L Desmond-Williams	Cllr D Evans	Cllr P Jenkins	Jones
Kearn	RL Penhale-Thomas	AA Pucella	KL Rowlands
CE Smith	SG Smith	RME Stirman	T Thomas
JH Tildesley MBE	Warren		

Apologies for Absence

P Davies, Cllr C Evans, Cllr D John, B Sedgebeer and A Williams

Officers:

Julie Ellams	Democratic Services Officer - Committees
Gary Jones	Head of Democratic Services
Zak Shell	Head of Neighbourhood Services

154. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr H Bennett declared a personal interest in agenda item 5, Town Centre Cleansing and Maintenance, point 4.21 3rd Sector Working/Volunteering because she was the CEO of CVC and the Volunteer Centre for the County BAVO.

155. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of a meeting of the Town and Community Council Forum dated 16 October 2017 be approved as a true and accurate record.

156. REVIEW OF THE FUTURE OF THE COMMUNITY AND TOWN COUNCIL SECTOR IN WALES

The Forum received a presentation from Claire Germain, Welsh Government (WG) on the consultation on the Review of the Future of the Community and Town Council Sector in Wales. She explained that an Independent Review Panel had been appointed to explore the potential role of local government below principal. The Review Panel would also look to define the most appropriate model/structure to deliver this role and how these models and structures should be applied across Wales. Since the start of the Review in July last year, the panel had heard views and gathered evidence from a range of stakeholders including Community and Town Councils, Local Authorities, the Third Sector and key stakeholders. The Forum were advised that their views on what they should be responsible for, how they should operate, what barriers stood in the way and what opportunities existed were welcomed and a link was provided to a survey where this information could be submitted. The Forum was advised that the findings would be pulled together in July with a final report available in the autumn.

Forum Members raised a number of issues including:

- The Town and Community Councils working together and problems with the difference in the precepts. The WG representative explained that the Panel were still in “listening mode” and bringing evidence together in considering the voice of the community and working together to provide services.
- The difference between the wants and needs of Community and Town Councils. The WG representative explained that the sense of difference was coming through strongly and the key point was what the community wanted and needed.
- Were more powerful Town and Community Councils envisaged? The WG representative explained that it was too early to have a firm view however the Panel were asking if Town and Community Councils required more powers.
- The value of strong advice when required.
- If there were more responsibilities on Town and Community Councils would there also be a review of funding and particularly external funding. The WG representative commented that this appeared to be a theme in the evidence they had considered to date.
- The lack of influence when it came to planning applications. Town and Community Councils could state the issues but the Development Control Committee always went with the officer recommendation.
- Finance arrangements were based on an antiquated system where cheques were signed by signatories and the precept was held by the local authority.
- Would the Panel be considering models in place in England? The WG representative explained that models in England, USA and other countries were being considered.
- Would the Panel be considering post Brexit arrangements and austerity which were likely to continue for the foreseeable future? The WG representative explained that the Panel should be aspirational and take into account Brexit and austerity.
- This review was premature, a decision on the county boroughs had to be made first and until then everything was in limbo. The WG representative explained that the wider picture was being considered and the review was being undertaken alongside other plans and was both proactive and ambitious.
- Could Town and Community Councils be dissolved or would they be protected? The WG representative explained that they could continue or be dissolved. There had been little change for many years but if there was no requirement for them to continue then that could change.
- Some communities were not aware that they could set up a Council and be supported. It was also not clear how a model could look and what could be achieved.
- Interest was declining and there was a lack of candidates. The Head of Democratic Services reported that this had been raised at a Member Support Officer Network meeting. Bridgend were in a strong position with 20, Swansea had 4 and Powys had 110.
- The Public were unclear on the role of the Town and Community Council and a core remit was required to make it clearer.
- It was important to reflect on the difference between representation and service delivery.

The WG representative thanked Forum Members for their comments and encouraged them to take part in the online consultation.

RESOLVED: The Town and Community Council Forum noted and considered the information contained within the report.

157. **TOWN CENTRE CLEANSING AND MAINTENANCE**

The Head of Neighbourhood Services presented a report providing information in regards to maintenance and cleansing including cleansing programmes and highway surface water drainage for the major towns within the borough.

The Head of Neighbourhood Services explained that since 2010, there had been an ongoing programme of financial savings to meet reductions in public funding and as a result there had been a reduction in staff and service levels to meet savings targets. He outlined the street cleansing tables and explained that they were often adapted to change the frequency of cleansing and litter picking to ensure a service was provided in all areas. He explained that the Cleaner Streets Team had recognised that in these austere times to be able to maintain a satisfactory service provision, closer working with Town Councils was required.

The Head of Neighbourhood Services outlined progress in a project relating to dog fouling, the introduction of TIKSPAC posts, 3rd sector working and volunteering and other street cleansing team activities and drainage. He explained that there was little opportunity for his staff to undertake enforcement so outsourcing on a self-funding basis was being considered.

A Member raised a concern regarding dog fouling and sports pitches and playgrounds and asked if any progress had been made. The Head of Neighbourhood Services explained that Public Spaces Protection Orders and improved powers were being considered before consultation. In some places these areas were the only areas available for dog walking and it could be a challenge to implement any proposals. A member stated that bag dispensers next to the bins appeared to be a positive and effective way of dealing with the issue.

The Head of Neighbourhood Services was asked if there had been any prosecutions for dog fouling in BCBC and he confirmed there had been no prosecutions within BCBC for dog fouling.

A Member welcomed the idea of enforcement and suggested working with other authorities to share best practice. Social media campaigns and apps where incidents could be reported could be the way forward. The Head of Neighbourhood Services confirmed that he was considering an app for environmental complaints such as street lights and pot holes.

A Member stressed the importance of co-ordinating the work of the 3rd sector and volunteers with the work of BCBC and that equipment and information packs could be provided to help with the work. Concerns were raised that following the reduction in staff from 41 to 18, were there any guarantees that the schedules could be fulfilled. The Head of Neighbourhood Services agreed that there had been significant reductions in resources but every effort had been made to make the best use of what was available and the key areas were the last to be touched.

A Member referred to the decline in the appearance of the streets with overflowing bins and inadequate gully inspections and clearance. He outlined problems in his area and suggested that the issue should be dealt with more proactively.

A Member referred to Keep Wales Tidy and how packs had been developed and how individuals were matched to different organisations. The Group Manager Street Works explained that a new system was being developed by Keep Wales Tidy, BAVO and BCBC.

A Member praised the front line staff working in all conditions to empty bins and commented that problems had been exacerbated by the bin emptying scheme, bags not being delivered and bins being filled with household rubbish.

The Leader agreed that front line staff were a credit to the authority. More cuts would have to be made in the future and the dilemma was a decline in cleanliness or reductions to services for Looked after Children or other vulnerable groups.

The Head of Neighbourhood Services acknowledged the hard work of the teams and how the high levels of productivity could be demonstrated. A Member praised the Cleaner Streets Operations Officer and his positive approach to developing solutions. The Member added that there was a community responsibility and the time taken to photograph incidents could be better used to pick up the litter and resolve the problem immediately. If there was scope, roving CCTV cameras could be used in problem areas within the Borough.

A Member raised the problem of litter falling from full refuse wagons when they were being driven up hill with the sides open. The Head of Neighbourhood Services suggested that if this was an issue, they should contact him with details and he would remind the contractor.

A Member asked if there had been a reduction in the size of the garden waste sacks. The Head of Neighbourhood Services confirmed that the two had been compared side by side and they were identical.

A Member suggested that a reminder should be sent to the Police encouraging them and PCSOs to tackle the issue of dog fouling. The Leader agreed to raise the matter with the Police and Crime Commissioner.

RESOLVED: Members noted the report.

158. **REVISION TO THE TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCILS (TCC'S) CHARTER AND THE FORMAT OF THE TCC FORUM MEETINGS**

The Head of Democratic Services presented a report informing the TCC Forum of the recommendations of the Town and Community Council Charter Working Group regarding the review of the Town and Community Council Charter and the format of the TCC Forum meetings. He explained that the Charter was previously reviewed in 2016 when it was agreed that the Charter be reviewed annually to ensure it remained fit for purpose. In October 2017 a Working Group was established to develop capacity within the communities of the County Borough, minimise the impact of budget reductions to citizens and extend relationships with Third Sector and other organisations.

The Town and Community Council Forum discussed the recommendations in the report and agreed the recommendations detailed below:

Recommendations

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1. (a) That the 5 Councils who did not respond to the Charter consultation be contacted again to provide their views and that those Councils who required clarification on aspects of the Charter be contacted to address their concerns.

(b) The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 with its seven wellbeing goals and its five ways of working be used to provide the basis of the discussions with the Councils to progress the development of the Charter.

(c) Feedback from the Council engagements be collated by the Working Group and updates provided to the TCC Forum on a regular basis.

(d) That the Forward Work programming for the Forum be enhanced and that its meetings consider a wider range of items including current and planned consultations, the sharing of good practice and information, and identifying opportunities for Councils to work together.

(e) That the Clerks meetings should be continued and dovetailed with the TCC Forum meetings.

(f) The frequency of TCC Forum meetings be maintained at 4 per year but reviewed over the next 12 months. The Forward Work Programme will determine if additional meetings are needed during the year.

(g) Representatives of Town and Community Councils be able to provide a named substitute if they are unable to attend a meeting of the Forum.

(h) A survey of meeting timings be undertaken to determine the preferred day and time of future meetings of the Forum to remove any barriers preventing member's attendance at these meetings

(i) That these proposals be reviewed after 12 months.

(j) Each Town and Community Council be requested to have a standing item on their agenda to:
 - consider items for inclusion on the Town and Community Council Forum agenda.
 - consider feedback from meetings of the Town and Community Council Forum
 - identify proposals for inclusion on the TCC Charter Action Plan which would aid the development of the Charter.

The TCC Forum noted that any agreed recommendations not falling within the remit of the Town and Community Council Forum would be reported to Bridgend County Borough Council or the appropriate Town and Community Council for approval.

159. URGENT ITEMS

None

The meeting closed at 18:05