

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE TOWN & COMMUNITY COUNCIL FORUM HELD IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND ON MONDAY, 12 JANUARY 2015 AT 4.00 PM

Present

Councillor MEJ Nott OBE (Chair)

Councillors:

PA Davies
E Dodd
EM Hughes

Councillors:

RD Jenkins
HE Morgan
G Phillips

Councillors:

CL Reeves
M Reeves
CE Smith

Councillors:

RL Thomas
HJ Townsend
R Williams

Town and Community Councillors:

Brackla	-	CL Jones
Bridgend Town		RDL Burns
Coity Higher		A Davies
Coychurch Higher		N Oram

Officers:

	Rand	Head of Finance & ICT
	al	
	Hemingway	
Kevin Mulcahy		Group Manager - Highways Services
Mark Shephard		Corporate Director - Communities

75. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from the members for the reasons so stated:

Councillor M Butcher – Recuperating from operation
Councillor D Sage – In hospital
Councillor Y Nott – Unwell.

76. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

77. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Town and Community Council Forum of 27 October 2014 be approved as a true and accurate record subject to the words 'would be a decision of this Authority and this Authority alone' being added to the end of the last sentence of the fourth paragraph of minute no. 70 on page 66.

78. RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

The Forum received a presentation from the Manager Countryside and Tourism on the outcome of the Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 and on progress with proposals for the 2014-2020 programme.

He informed the Forum that the 2007-2013 programme had 4 axes and delivered over two phases 2008-2011 and 2011-2014. For many, RDP funding through Axis 3 and 4 was the only source of regeneration funding available through the Council which was implemented through the Rural Partnership and the Local Action Group, chaired by the Deputy Leader. The programme set out to create a cohesive, sustainable and connected rural Bridgend and was aligned to the corporate priorities. The Manager Countryside and Tourism informed the Forum of the breakdown of the programme finances which totalled £5.5m made up of the RDP and match funded by BCBC and the private sector.

The Manager Countryside and Tourism informed the Forum that the total value of funding of the new programme in Wales is £953m, with LEADER and Local Development funding of £95m, split on a 50/50 basis between LEADER projects and Rural Community Development Fund. LEADER funding would be delivered in rural areas by a Local Action Group through a community-led approach and funding allocated to each Local Action Group by the Welsh Government. There would be 1 LEADER action plan per area, aligned to the 5 LEADER themes with a start date of February 2015. He informed the Forum of the 7 LEADER principles.

The Manager Countryside and Tourism also informed the Forum that funding for the Rural Community Development Fund would be allocated by the Welsh Government through competitive bidding rounds and projects must demonstrate alignment to the Local Development Strategy. Funding was open to all community based organisations including local authorities. The Fund was expected to be launched in mid-2015.

The Manager Countryside and Tourism outlined the aims of the Local Development Strategy and Action Plan which had been developed as a mechanism for delivering LEADER funds for the period 2014-2020. He outlined the next steps for the commencement of LEADER delivery.

In response to a question from a member of the Forum, the Manager Countryside and Tourism stated that officers could assist in progressing a hydro energy project. He also informed the Forum that officers would look at the funding stream for community led energy schemes.

A member of the Forum questioned whether the plan should include links between tourism and urban and rural areas as it was an important element of the RDP. The Manager Countryside and Tourism informed the Forum that there was a need to align the strategies, however tourism resources had decreased due to budget constraints. A member of the Forum stated that Laleston Community Council had had replaced styles with kissing gates and had seen a fourfold increase in the use of footpaths and if this followed in other areas of the County Borough and co-ordinated could lead to the area becoming a destination for walkers. The Manager Countryside and Tourism confirmed that the outdoor environment in the County Borough is a big draw.

In response to a question from a member of the Forum, the Manager Countryside and Tourism stated that information on obtaining funding and all activities was available on the Reach website.

The Manager Countryside and Tourism informed the Forum that officers were exploring the use of RDP funding for non-statutory services such as parks, pavilions and rights of way.

RESOLVED: That the Forum noted the report.

79. UNADOPTED STREETS AND LANES

The Group Manager Highways reported on the current policy for the adoption of back lanes and private streets. He stated that the issue of streets/ back lanes which were not adopted was a historical matter with developers not entering into agreements with local authorities over the future maintenance of streets and access ways, which in some circumstances were to a substandard construction. If a back lane or street was not adopted it was the responsibility of the residents / owners to fund the upkeep.

The Group Manager Highways informed the Forum that the Council's policy on private streets and back lanes was approved by the Highways, Planning and Transportation Committee on 18 September 1996. The Policy related to 22 private streets and 37 back lanes, this number was far below the potential extent of private streets that exist within the County Borough. He outlined to the Forum that the funding contributions of the rolling programme of making-up private streets and back lanes under the Private Street Works Code which would be implemented, subject to available funding to cover the Council's contribution to such schemes. He also outlined the criteria for selecting / prioritising private streets.

He reported that the rolling programme of "making-up" private streets and back lanes under the Private Street Works Code was dependent on available budget resources. He stated that in subsequent financial years it had not been possible to allocate funding and further work to prioritise schemes in accordance with the Council's adopted criteria had not yet been embarked upon by the Council. Given the current financial pressures this situation was unlikely to change in the medium term. Consequently, the private streets would remain the responsibility of the frontagers, until a Private Street Works scheme is completed in accordance with current rules whereupon the street will be adopted as a highway maintainable at the public expense.

A member of the Forum questioned the process for checking roads following their construction by developers. The Group Manager Highways informed the Forum that the developers would need to enter into a Section 278 Agreement with the Council which would require the payment of a Bond. In order that the street is adopted the developer would be required to have agreements with statutory undertakers. He stated that roads which were not adopted remained the responsibility of the developer.

In response to a question from the Forum, the Group Manager Highways would provide Town and Community Councils with salting routes and winter preparation information.

A member of the Forum questioned whether the Authority was responsible for maintaining rear lanes. The Group Manager Highways informed the Forum that a

number of rear lanes are adopted and also inspected, however not all rear lanes were adopted.

A member of the Forum questioned the timescale for pressurising developers to adopt roads following the completion of a development in order that residents receive the same services as residents who live on adopted roads. The Group Manager Highways informed the Forum that developers would need to agree sewers with the Drainage Agency before roads were adopted. There was a need to ensure due diligence so that the maintenance responsibility did not fall on the Council. He stated that it was in the developer's interest to comply with the requirements of highways agreements in order that they can pass on maintenance responsibility to the Council. Officers do try and resolve maintenance issues with developers but their progress on some developments were stymied. He also stated that he would inform the Forum of the enforcement powers available to the Council and confirm whether the Council had used enforcement powers against developers.

RESOLVED: That the Forum noted the content of the report.

80. **SCHEDULE OF AGENDA ITEMS**

The Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees presented a report on behalf of the Monitoring Officer, which informed the Forum of requests for items to be presented at future meetings and in addition, a report would be presented to the next meeting of the Forum on Democratic Diversity which would be presented by the Council's Diversity Champion.

RESOLVED: That the Forum noted the report and the items to be considered at future meetings.

81. **URGENT ITEMS**

The Chairperson has agreed to accept this item as an urgent of business in accordance with Rule 4 of the Council's Procedure Rules in order that the Town & Community Councils have this information in order to enable them to determine what support could be offered to the Authority in meeting its Medium Term Financial Strategy commitments.

82. **IMPACT OF THE BUDGET REDUCTIONS OUTLINED IN THE MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY ON THE DELIVERY OF KEY SERVICES**

The Head of Finance and ICT reported on the impact of budget reductions in the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) on the Council's ability to deliver key services. He stated that the Forum at its last meeting had received a presentation outlining the financial challenges facing the Council over the next four years. The Council had managed budget reductions without wide-scale reductions or redundancies.

He reported that the Welsh Government had announced an overall reduction in Revenue Support Grant of -4.5% for Bridgend for 2016-17 to 2018-19 assuming a council tax increase of 4.5% and total reduction targets of £48.82m over the next 4 financial years. He outlined those reductions proposals where there may be a direct impact on provision for residents within some or all Town and Community Councils. It was recognised that Town and Community Councils would not be able to take responsibility for all services that the County Borough Council will no longer be able to deliver or deliver as much of, requested that they give consideration on a prioritised basis, which services are most important to them locally and whether it was appropriate to raise their precept in order to fund the continuation of a services locally.

He informed the Forum that officers had met with representatives of Town and Community Councils on 5 December 2014 where presentations were made on the following service areas in the Communities Directorate and the impact the reduction proposals would have:

- Street Works Services - in particular, Street Cleaning, Public Toilets, Parks, Open Spaces and Bereavement Services:
- Highway Services – in particular, School Crossing Patrol Service, Subsidised Bus Services and Bus Shelter Maintenance:
- Cultural Services – exploring the development of a new Not for Profit Distributing Organisation (Cultural Trust) to manage and operate a range of cultural services.
- Regeneration – in particular Town Centre Management, Destination Management, Events and Match Funding.

The Head of Finance and ICT informed the Forum that the Council has an allocation of £50k from within the capital programme towards match funding for community capital projects. He stated that Town and Community Councils may wish to consider applying for funding to invest in community assets and services.

A member of the Forum questioned whether Town and Community Councils could have lead contacts at officer level as there was a need for clarity as to the proposed cuts in services and for Town and Community Councils to plan their budget accordingly. The Corporate Director Communities informed the Forum that there were a number of officers meeting separately with Town and Community Councils to discuss proposals for the responsibility of services to be undertaken by Town and Community Councils. He stated that following a change in responsibilities the Corporate Director Children's post had been re-designated as Corporate Director Education and Transformation and would be responsible for the transformation of how services are delivered. The Cabinet Member Strategic Change informed the Forum that he would be working with the Corporate Director Education and Transformation to liaise with Town and Community Councils.

A member of the Forum stated that a number of Town and Community Councils had already fixed their precepts and commented on the lack of liaison between the two tiers of local government. The Corporate Director Communities informed the Forum that timescales for this year were difficult and it was the intention in future years to have an earlier dialogue with Town and Community Councils on services which could be

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devolved due to the stringent measures placed on the Council for this year and beyond. He acknowledged the frustration experienced by Town and Community Councils and hoped processes will improve.

RESOLVED: That the Forum noted the report.

The meeting closed at 5.20 pm