

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE TOWN & COMMUNITY COUNCIL FORUM HELD IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB ON MONDAY, 21 SEPTEMBER 2015 AT 4.00 PM

Present

Councillor – Chairperson

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|------------|-------------|------------|-----------|
| M Butcher | EM Hughes | CL Jones | HE Morgan |
| G Phillips | DR Pugh | CL Reeves | M Reeves |
| RL Thomas | HJ Townsend | R Williams | |

Officers:

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| Darren Mepham | Chief Executive |
| Mark Shephard | Corporate Director – Communities |
| Lee Jones | Head of Regulatory Services |
| Gary Jones | Head of Democratic Services |
| Sarah Daniel | Democratic Services Officer - Committees |

96. APPOINTMENT OF A CHAIRPERSON

RESOLVED: That in the absence of the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson Councillor H Townsend was nominated and seconded to Chair the meeting.

97. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from the following Members/ Officers for the reasons so stated:

Cllr M Nott – Leave
Cllr C E Smith – Leave
Cllr L Ellis – Unwell
Cllr D Owen – Other Council Business
Cllr R Jenkins – Hospital Appointment
Cllr J R McCarthy – Leave
Cllr D B F White – Leave

98. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

99. ANNOUNCEMENTS OF THE CHAIRPERSON

The Chairperson made the following announcements to the Forum

Budget

She advised that the Town & Community Council Clerks were advised last month that the outcome of the Chancellor's Spending Review would not be published

until 25 November 2015. This would impact on the Welsh Government's budget allocation and their subsequent announcement of the Local Authorities settlement for 2016 - 17. As a result it was anticipated that BCBC would receive the provisional settlement at the end of December rather than October when the draft budget was usually received.

She explained that the autonomy of the Town and Community Councils was acknowledged, but the request to provide precept information earlier than usual was made to enable Bridgend County Borough Council to action all information which would be fixed or unchangeable. This would provide some flexibility for them to establish the overall budget by the required deadlines which remained unchanged even with the delays due to the Chancellors Spending review announcement.

The Chairperson concluded that following discussions with the Town & Community Councils the deadline for precept responses had been extended to the 18 January 2016 at the latest, but it was hoped that the majority of Council's would be able to meet the original request date of 8 January 2016.

Membership on Town and Community Council Forum

The Chairperson asked if representatives of Town & Community Councils on the Forum could let their Clerk know if any membership details on the agenda were incorrect.

She asked if this was the case, if the appropriate Clerk would advise the Democratic Services Section of any updates/changes in time for the next meeting in January.

100. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Town and Community Council Forum held on 29 June 2015 were approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting

101. BUDGET STRATEGY AND TRANSFORMATION REPORT

The Chief Executive provided a report and presentation to update the Forum on the progress of the Council's Budget and Transformation Strategy.

He explained that the Authority would be consulting on the draft Corporate Priorities in the Autumn with the focus on transforming the business to create a sustainable Local Authority, which also means a smaller Local Authority. He advised that a Medium Term Financial Strategy was being designed to support this.

The Chief Executive informed the Forum of their priorities in achieving the Budget and Transformation Strategy which were:

Priority One: Supporting a Successful Economy –

- Investment in Infrastructure in the three main towns;
- Working with local businesses to help them support once another
- Working with other South East Wales Councils to secure a Capital Deal for the Cardiff region

- Ensure appropriate high quality local education for people aged 16-24 and influence regional training opportunities more broadly

Priority Two: Helping people to be more self-reliant –

- Invest in targeted early help and intervention programmes for people
- Provide early advice to people and communities so that they can make informed choices and have earlier control over the support they receive from the Council and others
- To support carers by raising awareness of their roles, helping them to identify and design the support they need

Priority three: Smarter Use of Resources –

- To streamline internal business processes to give customers more automated and web based ways to access services
- Support communities and groups wishing to take on the running of facilities and services
- To tap into existing skills of staff to deliver change, invest in some new skills and work with staff on how the organisation changes

Members questioned if there would be funds available for much needed repairs of schools in the Borough, and stated that many of the school buildings were old and in desperate need of repair to ensure they were fit for purpose. The Chief Executive stated that there were sufficient funds available in the Schools Modernisation Programme. He added that the funds would be used to repair and replace with modern schools and also to re-profile schools to reduce the number of surplus places in many of the schools in the Borough.

Members questioned how the Authority would protect the funding cuts in Social Services until voluntary groups of support were in place. The Chief Executive stated that BCBC currently provides a higher level of care than that set by Welsh Government. He advised that the Authority would re-provision care services within the Borough and move to more cost effective solutions. He added that the Authority would ensure that the public were able to access other methods of care if they were not instilled in the Authority's care.

Members were concerned about external contracts such as Halo, V2C and the Cultural Trust and if they were providing as good a service as the Authority would if the services were kept in house. They were also concerned if the contracts provided value for money and if it would be more cost effective and beneficial to use talent that already exists within the Authority.

The Chief Executive stated that it made strategic and beneficial sense to form the external contracts that currently exist. He added that the Authority and its partners worked constructively together which was driven by a pragmatic approach, and further added that had it not been for the contracts, the Authority would not have been able to maintain the services at the current high standards.

Members questioned that in the interest of helping people become more self-reliant if the Authority had considered offering volunteering opportunities to local support groups. The Chief Executive stated that the Authority works closely with the Association of Volunteers, Communities First and Flying Start and encourages volunteers to play an active part in the community

RESOLVED: That the Forum noted the report.

102. COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER

The Corporate Director - Communities presented a report to the Forum on proposals approved by the Council's Cabinet in July 2015 to both improve the pace and extend the number of Community Asset Transfers (CAT). He stated that there had been a number of successful CATs in that time, which included the former Bridgend Library.

The Corporate Director – Communities stated that in some cases a transfer of an asset to a Community Group or a Town and Community Council offered an opportunity to maintain and preserve valuable community services which may have otherwise been under threat; or alternatively to improve the provision that was already available. He advised that in March 2015 a task and finish group was established to review the Council's approach to CAT with the aim of increasing the pace and the number of CATs. He added that the recommendations which had been approved by Cabinet were as follows:

- The Council should draw up a list of assets which it was prepared to transfer to the community, taking account of the emerging corporate priorities and MTFs budget reduction requirements and giving an indicative timetable
- A fixed term dedicated CAT Officer post be created to work with Community Groups/ Organisations to progress CAT applications, providing a single point of contact within the Council
- The current CAT guidance should be amended in line with the new Welsh Government Best Practice Guide and best practice examples in other authorities, establishing clear roles and responsibilities including and setting out a framework for considering requests for CAT including a 4 stage process made up of, expression of Interest, development of a business plan, formal assessment of the business plan and completion of the transaction
- To facilitate CAT, a limited capital funding pot to be created to enable assets to be transferred in a reasonable state of repair and transition revenue funding to be considered, on a case by case basis, subject to a satisfactory business case being made

The Corporate Director – Communities advised that the CAT priorities would be based on the agreed current MTFs proposals and also on what was deemed to be likely to fall out of the future MTFs proposals for 2017/18 onwards. He added that up to £200,000 would be set aside in the Change Management Ear Marked Reserve to fund a 3 year fixed term dedicated CAT Officer post and to meet additional legal and property requirements. He further added that if successful, time limited funding should be provided from the Change Management Ear Marked Reserve, subject to a satisfactory business case and affordability.

Members expressed concern around the £50,000 funding from the Capital Programme that supports Town and Community Councils being re-focused to support the CAT. The Corporate Director – Communities stated that greater collaboration would be needed between the larger and smaller Town and Community Town Councils to be able to mitigate any possible issues.

Members asked if Cemetery's would be considered as part of the CAT as they generated income. The Corporate Director – Communities stated that they are not for

profit and the intention is for them to break even. He added that if there was a particular interest from an organisation to take over the transfer of one, then it could be considered if there was a strong business case for it. Members questioned if there was funding in place to bring the pavilions in the Borough up to standard before a CAT would take place.

The Corporate Director – Communities stated that there was up to £1m Capital Funding available for repairs; however there were 40 pavilions to consider in allocating the funding. He added that once a CAT would take place there would be an arrangement in place with the relevant body to ensure that they were able to maintain the property going forward.

Members asked if any competency tests would be carried out before a CAT is made. The Corporate Director – Communities stated that each business case must meet the application Criteria that was detailed in appendix 3 and each case would go through an approved process, and would be assessed on its own merits before it would be taken forward and approved by Cabinet.

Members queried the consultation process before a CAT would take place. The Corporate Director – Communities advised before a CAT would take place it would firstly go through the relevant procedures such as initial support of detailed finance and business plans. The final stages would be that the business case to be approved by Cabinet before the CAT would take place. He advised that the consultation would vary for each CAT but assured Members there would be clarity for Town and Community Councils and the public.

RESOLVED: That the Town and Community Council Forum noted:

- The recommendations at paragraph 4.1
- The prioritisation of assets for possible transfer based on MTFS proposals
- The revised CAT Guidance at Appendix 1 for consultation
- The funding proposals

103. **CHARTER BETWEEN BCBC AND TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCILS**

The Head of Regulatory Services provided a report to the Forum to inform them of the current Charter between Bridgend County Borough Council and the Town and Community Council of Bridgend County Borough.

He explained that in February 2015 the Welsh Government published a White Paper: Reforming Local Government: Power to Local People. He stated that it recognised that Local Government in Wales was currently under severe pressure as a result of austerity policies and a rising demand for services. He added that it was acknowledged that the existing Charter between Bridgend County Borough Council and the 20 Town and Community Councils within Bridgend County Borough was considered a useful tool but had not progressed significantly since its implementation. However, it did provide a framework to take forward existing good practice, develop common priorities and to minimise the impact that the significant budget cuts over the next few years would have on citizens within the County Borough. Therefore, it was proposed that a working group be established to:

- Review the existing Town and Community Council Charter
- Identify opportunities to:
 - Develop capacity within the communities of the County Borough
 - Minimize the impact of budget reductions to citizens

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- Extend relationships with Third Sector and other organisations

The following Members were nominated to be a part of the Working group, with the first meeting being held at 2pm on 22 October 2015 in the Civic Offices, Bridgend.

Cllr CE Smith – BCBC Representative
Cllr HE Morgan – BCBC Representative
Cllr H Townsend – BCBC Representative
Cllr M Reeves – BCBC Representative
X2 Vacancies – BCBC Representative
Cllr RDL Burns – Bridgend Town Council Representative
Cllr R Davies – Laleston Community Council
Cllr M Jenkins – Ogmores Valley Community Council
Vacancy – Maesteg Town Council
Vacancy – Porthcawl Town Council
Vacancy – Community Council

RESOLVED: That the Town and Community Council Forum:

- Noted the content of the report
- Approved the establishment of a working group as was identified in paragraph 4.11 of the report.
- Appointed representatives to the working group as proposed in paragraph 4.12 of the report
- Approved that the first meeting of the working group be held on 22 October 2015 at 2.00pm

104. **SCHEDULE OF AGENDA ITEMS**

The Head of Democratic Services presented a report to the Forum to inform them of the requests for items to be presented to future meetings.

RESOLVED: That the Town and Community Council Forum noted the content of the report

105. **URGENT ITEMS**

None reported

The meeting closed at 6.00 pm