

**TOWN & COMMUNITY COUNCIL FORUM - MONDAY, 10 JULY 2017**

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE TOWN & COMMUNITY COUNCIL FORUM HELD IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB ON MONDAY, 10 JULY 2017 AT 4.00 PM**

Present

Councillor HJ David – Chairperson

S Aspey	JPD Blundell	MC Clarke	P Davies
Cllr R Davies	Cllr C Evans	Cllr D Evans	T Giffard
RM Granville	Cllr P Gwilliam	A Hussain	B Jones
RL Penhale-Thomas	KL Rowlands	B Sedgebeer	CE Smith
RME Stirman	T Thomas	MC Voisey	

Apologies for Absence

Cllr D John and SG Smith

Officers:

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144. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Davies declared a personal interest in agenda item 4 because he was a Director of a company involved with CAT.

Cllr Bennett declared a personal interest in agenda item 4 because the company she worked for was a provider of advice services under CAT.

S Bennett declared a personal interest as the Chair of Cornelly Community Centre.

145. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of a meeting of the Town & Community Council dated 13 March 2017 be approved as a true record of the meeting.

146. COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER (CAT) UPDATE

The Community Asset Transfer Officer presented a report with an outline of Bridgend County Borough Council's Community Asset Transfer policy and the opportunities currently available to work with the Council and community groups to achieve the best management arrangements for public sector property assets.

He explained that there had been a number of successful CATs, including the transfer of Carnegie House (the former Bridgend Library) to Bridgend Town Council that was subject to full-scale refurbishment in 2013 which was often used as an exemplar by Welsh Government.

He continued that it was imperative that the public sector continued to work in collaboration to safeguard the services of value to communities, helping to build a prosperous Wales for current and future generations. The transfer of an asset to a Town and Community Council or a community group offered an opportunity to maintain

and preserve valuable community services which might otherwise be under threat; or alternatively to improve the provision that was already available.

Welsh Government issued an updated “Best Practice Guide – Community Asset Transfer in Wales” (March 2016) that was designed to help manage the process, minimise risk, ensure that proposals accorded with the Council’s strategy and that community groups were fully aware of the liabilities and responsibilities they would face.

In March 2015 the Council’s Strong Communities Connecting Services (SCCS) Board established a Task and Finish group to review its approach to CAT with the aim of increasing the pace and the number of CATs. The recommendations of the Task and Finish group were approved by Cabinet on 14 July 2015. The Council determined asset groups –

- Priority 1 – Public Toilets, Parks Pavilions, Bus Shelters and Community Centres
- Priority 2 – Playgrounds, Playing fields and Bowling Greens
- Priority 3 – Miscellaneous assets

The Corporate Director (Communities) wrote to clerks of Town and Community Councils and relevant Community Groups and Sports Clubs on 16 October 2015 to invite expressions of interest in transferring council assets under CAT Priority 1.

A full-time CAT Officer was appointed November 2015 to deal with enquiries and to provide advice and guidance. An updated guidance on Community Asset Transfer was issued in October 2015 to reflect best practice, revisions to systems and processes and the establishment of clear roles and responsibilities for a four stage process.

He explained that to facilitate CAT the Council had secured £1M from capital funding to support organisations wishing to take over Sports Pavilions and set aside £200k from the Change Management Earmarked Reserve to fund a dedicated CAT officer for a 3 year period along with specific legal and property support to enable the programme to move forward. Council had also approved an additional £50k capital funding per annum from 2016/17 to 2018/19 to support TCC’s to undertake capital projects. This was in addition to re-focusing the £50k already in the Capital Programme in each of these years for community purposes to support CAT. The sum of £176.5k had been made available from Core and SRF funds until March 2019 for the CAT Business Support Contact to provide community groups with business planning and specialist advice. A CAT Steering Group had been established to primarily oversee the transfer of Priority 1 assets.

Since the creation of the CAT Officer post in November 2015, 71 community organisations had contacted BCBC in respect of 59 different assets, 5 town and community councils were progressing applications including public toilets, pavilions and playing fields and bus shelters and 23 applications were currently live and subject to the development of a formal expression of interest, business case or seeking final approval.

The Rural Development Programme commissioned a review to determine the impact of CAT upon clubs and societies operating in the rural wards of Bridgend. The review resulted in 4 recommendations whose implementation was presently being considered as part of a wider internal review of systems and processes.

The Community Asset Transfer Officer explained that a report seeking approval for interim changes to the CAT Policy was scheduled to be presented to Cabinet in July 2017. The Policy would be subject to a further review and updating and a further report would be submitted to Cabinet to reflect the changes.

A member of the Forum referred to the £1M secured to support organisations wishing to take over Sports Pavilions and asked how much was available for other priority 1 categories such as public toilets. The member was advised that £100,000 pa was available from the TCC fund which could be used to contribute to any CAT of public toilets. No direct funding had been set aside for the community asset transfer of public toilets. The Council had increased the level of funding that was available from the Town and Community Council Fund by £50K in 2016/17 and a further £50K in both 2017/18 and 2018/19 to assist with CAT transfers that could include public toilets should match funding be made available by Town and Community Councils.

A member of the Forum commented that progress was very slow and that the £1M set aside two years ago remained untouched. The CAT Officer confirmed that to date £110K had been allocated to a rugby club depending on them finding £390,000 for a community hub. Other projects were likely to be completed during 2017/18.

A member of the Forum asked for an update on Porthcawl museum and was advised that it fell outside the remit of CAT and was part of a separate agreement with property and an update would be forwarded to the member.

A member of the Forum commented that Carnegie House was a point of interest. He stated that apart from Newbridge Fields Cricket Pavilion most of the interest seemed to be in public toilets. He asked how the bus station toilets contained wholly within the bus station could be split. The Skills and Sustainable Development Manager confirmed that enquiries regarding this asset would be made.

A member of the Forum suggested that it would be useful for successful applications to be presented to the Forum for information.

A member of the Forum welcomed the report and referred to the financial arrangements with Merthyr Town Council and the ladies toilets which were in need of repair. There was a disagreement as to who was responsible for the costs of repairing the toilets and what BCBC considered as an asset with a value to hand over. The funds set aside could run down quickly so he was keen to know the accepted standard.

A member of the Forum referred to priority three, smarter use of resources and the importance of making use of solar panels and turbines for schools. Some council buildings bordered rivers and there was an opportunity to harness the energy and even sell power.

The Leader of the Council explained that when new schools were built they included solar panels and there were various schemes to generate energy such as the renewable energy project in the Llynfi Valley.

The Skills and Sustainable Development Manager explained that there was an officer looking at ways to reduce costs and a presentation could be made to a future meeting if required.

A member of the Forum commented that it would be useful to harness the energy from some of the fastest flowing rivers in the Borough. A decision had been taken not to allow phone masts in schools and other council buildings but other ways of reducing costs could be considered.

Members also discussed the option of changing the academic year so that holidays were taken during the winter months and brown water capture.

A member of the Forum referred to the recent fire at Caerau Welfare Park and asked if it would be put back to a fit state before being transferred. The CAT Officer explained that he was aware of the fire and that work would probably be covered by insurance and he would update the member concerned.

A member of the Forum commented that certain assets had not been included in the original report and asked for confirmation that all Clerks of TCC's had been contacted to invite expressions of interest. He was advised that the new list circulated at the start of the meeting had been updated in consultation with Property Services. The list was likely to be subject to further updating to reflect changes to community asset transfer priorities as and when the policy review was completed. Clerks of TCC's would be notified when a finalised list was ready for distribution.

**RESOLVED:** Members of the Town and Community Council Forum noted the Council's:

1. Community Asset Transfer Policy and associated funding that had been set aside to encourage and support the transfer of Priority 1 assets.
2. List of CAT Priority 1 Assets that were available for transfer in the report.
3. Recognition that community owned and managed models of delivery could reinvigorate community assets and ensure that local groups could directly control what happened within the locality in which they operated. The success of community asset transfer was dependent on the proactive participation of willing participants - Town and Community Councils and community organisations - together with their ability and capacity to manage the asset.
4. Commitment to engage with Town and Community Councils and community groups to progress Community Asset Transfers.
5. Intention to make changes to community asset transfer systems and processes to reflect best practice and reduce bureaucracy which would be confirmed in an updated CAT guidance document when Council strategy and priorities had been approved by Cabinet.

147. **ESTABLISHMENT OF A REVIEW PANEL**

The Head of Democratic Services presented a report requesting that the Town and Community Council Forum establish a review panel to consider the Bridgend County Borough Charter and the format of meetings of the Town and Community Council Forum to improve engagement and strengthen collaborative working between all Councils.

He explained that in 2007 the Welsh Government published a Local Government Policy Statement "A Shared Responsibility" which set out the expectations of Local Authorities and the support that the Welsh Government aimed to provide.

In response to this policy statement a joint guidance document "A Shared Community - Relationship Building and Charters for Unitary Authorities and Community and Town Councils" was released in 2008 by the Welsh Local Government Association, One Voice Wales and the Welsh Government.

The Head of Democratic Services explained that on 26th May 2009 a Charter for Bridgend County Borough was adopted as the basis for developing positive working relationships between Bridgend County Borough Council and Community and Town Councils within the County Borough.

He explained that the Charter was subsequently reviewed, updated and adopted on 18 July 2016. It was agreed during the review process that the Charter would be reviewed annually to ensure that it remained effective.

The Head of Democratic Services explained that the existing Charter was developed by a working group appointed by the Town and Community Council Forum. It was proposed that a similar working group be established to review the existing Town & Community Council Charter in order to identify opportunities 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

He proposed that the working group should comprise equal representation from Bridgend County Borough Council and the Town and Community Councils. To reflect recent changes to the Forum the working group should be formed by 12 elected representatives of the Town and Community Forum as follows:

- 2 Elected Member representatives from Town Councils,
- 4 Elected Member representatives from Community Councils and
- 6 Elected Member representatives from Bridgend County Borough Council.

In addition 1 Clerk from a Town Council and 1 Clerk from a Community Council not represented by Elected Members would also be invited to participate in the working group.

It was proposed that a meeting of the working group be scheduled for 4 September 2017 at 10:00am in Committee Rooms 1/2/3 Civic Offices Angel Street Bridgend.

In addition to reviewing the Charter, the working group would consider the format of the meetings of the Town and Community Council Forum and be requested to propose possible changes which would support effective collaborative working.

It was anticipated that the review group would complete its review of the Charter and the format of the meetings and report back to the next meeting of the Forum on 16 October 2017.

The Leader stated that he was happy to take nominations at the meeting.

**RESOLVED:** The Town and Community Council Forum:

1. Noted the content of the report

2. Approved the establishment of a working group as identified in paragraph 4.2 of the report
3. Appointed representatives to the working group as detailed below:

**BCBC Representatives:**

1. Cllr CE Smith Chairperson
2. Cllr P Davies
3. Cllr A Hussain
4. Cllr T Giffard
5. Cllr R Stirman
6. Cllr B Sedgebeer

**Town Council Representatives:**

7. Cllr Warren (Bridgend)
8. Cllr Walters (Porthcawl)

**Community Council Representatives:**

9. Cllr Evans (Cefn Cribwr)
1. Cllr Kay John (replacing Cllr Workman)
2. Cllr R Davies (Laleston)
3. Cllr K Rowlands (Brackla)

**Invitees:**

Town Clerk           Ceri Evans (Porthcawl)  
Community Clerk   Dawn Evans (Cornelly)

4. Approved that the first meeting of the working group be held on 4 September 2017 at 10:00.

148. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

The meeting closed at Time Not Specified