

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE TOWN & COMMUNITY COUNCIL FORUM HELD IN REMOTELY VIA SKYPE FOR BUSINESS ON MONDAY, 26 OCTOBER 2020 AT 16:00

Present

Councillor HJ David – Chairperson

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| S Aspey | SE Baldwin | JPD Blundell | Cllr S Dendy |
| DK Edwards | D Evans | RM Granville | Pratt |
| JC Radcliffe | Reeves | KL Rowlands | B Sedgebeer |
| CE Smith | SR Vidal | KJ Watts | RE Young |

Apologies for Absence

Officers:

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| Andrea Boyce | Consultation Engagement and Equalities Officer |
| Nicola Bunston | Consultation Engagement and Equalities Manager |
| Judith Jones | Partnership Co-ordinator |
| Gill Lewis | Interim Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change |
| Jonathan Parsons | Group Manager Development |
| Andrew Rees | Democratic Services Manager |
| Kevin Stephens | Democratic Services Assistant |

194. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor S Dendy declared a personal interest as a member of the Public Services Board.

Councillor SE Baldwin declared a personal as a member of Bridgend Town Council.

195. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the 10/12/19 be approved as a true and accurate record.

196. ROAD ADOPTIONS

The Group Manager Planning and Development Services provided an overview of the highway adoption process in Bridgend and outline the various stages involved in road adoption, the issues and problems together with the potential for improvement to the system both locally and nationally.

He informed the Forum the Council is responsible for overseeing the processes to secure the adoption of new highways and the modification of existing highways constructed by developer, commonly known as Section 38 and Section 278 agreement highway works. The local highway authority can 'adopt' a road but there is no legal process to force developers to seek adoption. The Council will only adopt a new road if it is constructed to certain standards and may also adopt an existing road but in doing so takes on the ongoing maintenance liability. The adoption process normally starts at planning pre-application stage where a developer enters into discussion with the local planning authority and the highway authority regarding a new development - planning and highway requirements are set out. He outlined the problems with the current process and possible solutions.

He informed the Forum that the Minister for Education and Transport had set up an Unadopted Roads Task Force to look at the issues in Wales and in so doing identify the extent of unadopted roads and what could be done to improve the situation. As a result a Good Practice Guide was agreed together with the use of a set of common Common Standards. Once implemented, this approach is considered to reduce significantly the chances of any further 'unadopted road' being created. Work has also progressed in establishing a database to provide a comprehensive record of all unadopted roads in Wales, which has been used to provide the quantum of unadopted roads. He stated that a final report was issued in September 2020 to build on the initial work and address the recommendations emanating from the initial report. He highlighted the recommendations emanating from the report.

A member of the Forum commented that unadopted roads are causing major problems for residents in many valley communities and asked if the Council could take up this issue. The Leader advised that this is one of the areas being looked at by the Task Force to establish the extent of the problem. The Group Manager Planning and Development Services informed the Forum that this is an issue across Wales in both rural and urban areas and whether there is no registered owner, the burden falls on the residents. There would be a considerable financial burden on the Council to adopt roads which are unadopted and with no resources to do so.

A member of the Forum asked would the Council consider an approach by a Town or Community Council if it was able to bring up a road to an adoptable standard or to make a partial contribution. The Leader commented that the Council may consider such an approach and the Council is open to working with Town and Community Councils. The Group Manager Planning and Development Services informed the Forum that the Council did not have resources to adopt roads and there is no programme for adoptions, however a Town and Community Council could support the adoption of a road.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Town and Community Council Forum noted the report.
2. That a further report be presented to the Forum on progress once the Welsh Government Unadopted Roads Task Force recommendations are available and whether resources are made available by the Welsh Government to support a programme for the adoption of roads. If resources become available consideration be given to working with Town and Community Councils to bring roads up to an adoptable standard.

197. BRIDGEND PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD

The Partnerships and Community Services Manager informed the Forum of the work of Bridgend Public Services Board (PSB) in relation to the Assessment of Well-being and the development of the next Well-being Plan for Bridgend County and the responsibilities of some Town and Community Councils under the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (the Act).

The Partnership and Community Services Manager informed the Forum that the PSB must publish its Well-being Assessment of Bridgend County no later than one year before it publishes its Well-being Plan and the Bridgend County Well-being Plan must be published no later than one year after the next ordinary election. This meant that the next well-being assessment will be published by 30 April 2022 and the Well-being plan published by 30 April 2023. She stated that developing the Well-being assessment is an extensive exercise and work will commence early in 2021 and she highlighted the timeline for completion of the Well-being assessment.

She reported on the duty on certain community and town councils to take all reasonable steps towards meeting the local objectives included in the Bridgend Well-being Plan that has effect in their areas. She stated that a community or town council is subject to that duty only if its gross income or expenditure was at least £200,000 for each of the three financial years preceding the year in which the local well-being plan is published. A town or community council subject to the duty must publish a report each relevant financial year detailing the progress it has made in meeting the objectives in the local well-being plan.

The Partnership and Community Services Manager reported that at the meeting of the Forum on 27 November 2018, Cllr Baldwin and Cllr Blundell agreed to become members of the PSB Assets Sub Board and have since been actively involved in workshops and the activities of the sub board. The sub board focuses on issues such as improving and protecting green spaces to help local people to use our natural, built and heritage assets to improve their well-being. She stated that the Bridgend PSB would like to further involve individual Town and Community Councils and the Town and Community Council Forum in the development of the Well-being Assessment and the Well-being plan.

A member of the Forum questioned as to when might the CIA be available. The Partnership and Community Services Manager informed the Forum that a draft of the report had been received and once signed off by the PSB will be circulated.

RESOLVED: That the Town and Community Council Forum considered the report and determined future actions and that Town and Community Councils notify the Partnerships and Community Safety Manager should they wish to nominate members to the PSB Assets Sub Board.

198. **FIT FOR THE FUTURE-BUDGET CONSULTATION 2020, ENGAGEMENT WITH TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCILS**

The Interim Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change delivered a presentation on the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2021-22 to 2024-25 in order to set the scene for future years' savings requirements and budget pressures. She informed the Forum that as at quarter 2, an overspend of £2m was forecast. She highlighted the financial impact of covid on the Council and that financial support had been provided by the Welsh Government in relation to the impact of covid. Monthly claims had been submitted by the Council to the Welsh Government, with claims of £5m paid to date to cover the partial contribution of the purchase of ICT equipment and the loss of income for quarter 1. The Interim Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change informed the Forum of the current funding pressures facing the Council, which had seen the Council Tax Reduction Scheme being £300,000 over budget and the collection rates of Council Tax impacted upon. She stated that the most optimistic budget scenario would be a £11m shortfall and there was likely to be new potential priorities in relation to business and the economy, homelessness, health and wellbeing, digitalisation and on the level of Council Tax collected.

The Consultation, Engagement and Equalities Manager highlighted the consultation process on the budget consultation, which this year had seen a decline in responses from previous years, due to the impact of covid. It was aimed that the consultation is as wide reaching as possible, and the team are continuously looking for ways to engage with the public and improve participation. However due to the impact of Covid-19 this year the capacity to engage with residents face to face is greatly restricted, and it was more it was more important than ever to ensure there is participation so that all residents and communities across the county borough have a voice in the consultation process.

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The Consultation, Engagement and Equalities Manager outlined the proposed timeframe for the Fit for the Future Budget consultation 2020 which is 19 October 2020 to 13 December 2020, focusing on seven key areas:

- Responding to the Covid-19 pandemic;
- Business and the economy;
- Health and wellbeing;
- Customer access to Civic offices;
- Digitalisation;
- Council Tax levels;
- The future.

She stated the survey aims to gain views from residents about which services have been most important to them during lockdown, how the council have performed during the Covid-19 pandemic, and what is important as we start to plan for the future, asking residents what the future priorities should be and it should implement these. She informed the Forum that Town and Community Councils will be provided with the electronic link to the consultation, e-poster and the explainer video. Paper copies are available where requested. She stated that the consultation will be available in a variety of formats, including online and paper, standard, easy read, youth version and large print and during the live period, officers will be available to remotely attend Town and Community Council meetings. The Consultation and Engagement team will liaise with Town and Community Council Clerks directly to arrange attendance at meetings and will develop a calendar of events for the live period, so all requests to attend meetings or events should be made as soon as possible. Meetings and events will not take place after the closing date of 13 December 2020. The Consultation, Engagement and Equalities Manager informed the Forum that the MTFS 2020 Budget Consultation Report will be presented to Cabinet in January 2021.

A member of the Forum questioned how the Council could improve digital connectivity with Town and Community Council Clerks. The Interim Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change commented that the Digital Board had a great deal of work to roll out, but would consider how it could improve digital connectivity with Town and Community Council Clerks.

- RESOLVED:
1. That the Town and Community Council Forum received and considered the report and gave consideration to engagement during the live period.
 2. That the Town and Community Council Forum noted the presentation by the Interim Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change.
 3. That consideration be given by the Digital Board as to how it could improve engage digital connectivity with Town and Community Councils.

199. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

The meeting closed at 17:30