

TOWN & COMMUNITY COUNCIL FORUM - MONDAY, 15 FEBRUARY 2021

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE TOWN & COMMUNITY COUNCIL FORUM HELD IN REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON MONDAY, 15 FEBRUARY 2021 AT 16:00

Present

Councillor HJ David – Chairperson

JPD Blundell	Cllr S Dendy	DK Edwards	B Jones
CE Smith	SG Smith	JH Tildesley MBE	SR Vidal
KJ Watts	RE Young		

Apologies for Absence

B Sedgebeer

Officers:

Nicola Bunston	Consultation Engagement and Equalities Manager
Mark Galvin	Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees
Gill Lewis	Interim Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change
Kelly Watson	Chief Officer Legal, HR and Regulatory Services
Delyth Webb	Group Manager - Strategic Regeneration

200. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

201. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of a meeting of the Town and Community Council Forum dated 26 October 2020, be approved as a true and accurate record.

202. OUTCOME OF THE CONSULTATION "FIT FOR THE FUTURE"

The Consultation, Engagement and Equalities Manager presented a report, the purpose of which, was to present the Town and Community Council Forum with a copy of the Outcome of the 'Fit for the Future' consultation report that was presented to Cabinet on 19 January 2021, for information.

She advised that, following a number of years of reductions in funding from central government, and continued financial pressures, along with addressing post-Covid-19 recovery, all Councils across the country are continuing to change the way they work and the services they provide so that they can manage with less. Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) has made reductions from its budget of £22 million over the last four years (2017-18 to 2020-21), with an expectation of significant further reductions required over the next four years.

A public consultation exercise was undertaken over an eight week period from 19 October 2020 to 13 December 2020 on the Council's budget proposals contained within its Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

With regard to this, respondents were asked to share their views on a range of areas including:-

- Responding to the COVID-19 pandemic;

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- Business and the economy;
- Health and wellbeing;
- Customer access to Civic Offices;
- Digitalisation;
- Council Tax levels;
- The future.

Within the background section of the report, it explained all the methods of consultation that had been pursued with stakeholders and other organisations/groups that included the Youth Council, in order to ensure that the process was far reaching and included as wide an audience as was possible, so that individuals and groups were able to be given an opportunity to respond to the consultation.

The Consultation, Engagement and Equalities Manager, confirmed that attached to the cover report, was a copy of the report to Cabinet on 19 January 2021 on the Outcome of the 'Fit for the Future' Consultation (at Appendix A).

The attached consultation report (at Appendix B), set out in detail the views expressed by those who had participated in the consultation.

Overall, the council had received 1,831 interactions from a combination of survey completions, engagement at various meetings, social media engagement and via the authority's Citizens' Panel. Due to the impact of Covid-19 this was a decrease of 5,606 (75%) on the 7,437 interactions from last year. A total of 1,421 survey responses were received, which was a decrease of 58% on last year's survey completions.

The response rate, by method of interaction, was detailed in paragraph 4.3 of the report.

There were no questions in relation to this report, which was for information purposes only.

RESOLVED: That the Town and Community Council Forum received and considered the report, alongside the detailed reports attached at Appendix A and Appendix B.

203. BRIDGEND TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION MASTERPLAN CONSULTATION (DECEMBER 2020 - MARCH 2021) - ENGAGEMENT WITH TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCILS

The Corporate Director – Communities submitted a report, the purpose of which, was to inform the Town and Community Council Forum of the proposed Masterplan for the Bridgend Town Centre and also of the public consultation, with the aim to ensure effective engagement with Town and Community Councils, local residents and businesses.

The report was supported by a power point presentation from Ms. Shruthi Guruswamy from BDP Consultants, on the current and future proposals.

The Group Manager – Strategic Regeneration, advised that the, Bridgend Town Centre Masterplan was commissioned in February 2020 with the purpose of it being a key strategic document to create a coherent basis for securing future funding, attracting investors and delivering a comprehensive range of regeneration projects.

BDP Consultants and the wider sub-consultant team consisting of Asbri Planning, Cooke and Arkwright and Phil Jones Associates were appointed by Bridgend County Borough

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Council (BCBC), to prepare a Regeneration Masterplan for and on behalf of BCBC for the Bridgend town centre.

The Masterplan purpose was to ensure that Bridgend builds on its many strengths, so that alongside recent investment, there is a catalyst for future growth that incorporates town centre mixed use regeneration. It will be used as a dynamic long-term planning document that will offer a theoretical layout to guide future regeneration and growth. It also provided analysis, recommendations, and proposals for the town centre. It complements the Local Development Plan and builds upon the Bridgend Town Centre Framework.

As part of the development of the Masterplan, BCBC had conducted an extensive stakeholder engagement process during the early stages of the project. The findings were represented / incorporated into the Masterplan. BCBC extended an invite to all external stakeholders including local organisations, landowners, the Bridgend Town Council, other governmental authorities and relevant working groups. BDP also subsequently conducted a visioning workshop with a range of external stakeholders.

The draft Masterplan was presently out for consultation, Members were advised.

The draft Bridgend Town Centre Masterplan, outlined a vision for a liveable and vibrant place. This vision brings together enterprise, employment, education, in-town living, shopping, culture, tourism and well-being within a historic setting.

She explained further, that the consultation gave an overview of the Plan which identified a series of ambitious and deliverable projects. To achieve the overall vision and regenerate Bridgend Town Centre over the next ten years, four broad themes had been identified:

- Growth;
- Resilience;
- Well-being;
- Identity

Bridgend town centre consists of a variety of uses, which has formed the basis of eight development zones, within which 23 relevant projects have been identified, plus a number of site wide projects.

The development zones included:

- The Railway Station Area
- Brackla, Nolton and Oldcastle
- The Retail Core
- Café and Cultural Quarter
- The Northern Gateway
- Riverside
- Newcastle
- Sunnyside

Key projects in the Masterplan were:

- A new entrance to the railway station from Tremains Road and Llynfi Lane;
- Improvements to the Northern Gateway - to create a legible and attractive gateway to the town centre;
- The relocation of Bridgend College to the town centre;
- To create a culture hub as an indoor event space;

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- A new town square;
- More in-town living;
- Better access to the town centre;
- Strengthen the retail core; and
- Improvements in and along the Ogmore River

The Group Manager – Strategic Regeneration confirmed that a consultation survey aimed to gain views from as many different people and businesses about what their preferred projects, options and priorities might be, in terms of the Masterplans future proposals.

The Vice-Chairperson of the Forum thanked Ms. Guruswamy and colleagues in BCBC for all the hard work that had been committed to the Bridgend Masterplan to date. He felt that the proposals within the Plan were exciting and would give vision to Bridgend in future, thus reflecting it as being a County town, through a future joined-up series of different strategies. Work was in progress with landowners in the town as well as stakeholders, with a view to pursuing the aspirations of the Masterplan which would be financially supported through grant funding, as well as through other avenues. Some of the aims and objectives of the Masterplan, would free-up some invaluable open space in the town, which was crucial in these times of Covid-19. The Plan would also bring in opportunities for further and higher education to the town centre, at the Cheapside Police Station site, he added.

A Member noted that there were a number of different projects earmarked in the Bridgend Masterplan, ie around 23 in total and undoubtedly these would be progressed with on a phased basis. He asked how long after the consultation ended would it be, before works commenced and if any of the Masterplans projects had been considered in order of priority.

The Group Manager – Strategic Regeneration advised that consultations were ongoing with Welsh Government and other key partners, for example landowners within the town and projects such as locating the College to the town centre was a realistic proposal that was not too far off. Some finance had been made available to fund the Masterplan in 2021-22 for this and negotiations were in place with Bridgend College currently. The train station propositions were also not that far away, as there was also funding available for works to be carried out there. The Council and partners were in consultations with Transport for Wales and Network Rail in relation to this particular project proposal, she advised. Smaller scale funding was also available presently, in order to 'green' the town centre and for smaller scale property enhancements.

A Member asked what was the total amount of cost estimated to support all the proposed projects within the Bridgend Masterplan and would any of it be funded by the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal.

The Leader confirmed that certain opportunities associated with the Masterplan had been actively explored with the City Deal, who had also been involved in the development process of the Bridgend Masterplan.

The Group Manager – Strategic Regeneration echoed the above, adding that the works planned at the Bridgend Railway Station aligned with the City Deal Metro project.

The representative from BDP Consultants stated, that the design, land acquisition and other relevant costs around the Bridgend Masterplan were difficult to gauge at the moment and would likely change in any event, as the Plan progressed in the future.

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A Member asked if the Bridgend Masterplan travel initiatives included any improved transport accessibility proposals from Bridgend to Porthcawl and vice-versa, in order that people could enjoy the different types of culture these two towns had to offer.

The Leader advised that as part of the Salt Lake car park project in conjunction with the City Deal ideology regarding improved travel links, bus transport routes would be strengthened between both Bridgend and Porthcawl, Porthcawl and Pyle Railway Station and Pyle and Bridgend. Improved Active Travel links were also being looked at he added, right throughout the County Borough.

RESOLVED: That the Forum noted the report and the accompanying presentation given by BDP Consultants.

204. LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND ELECTIONS (WALES) ACT 2021

The Chief Executive submitted a report that was presented by the Council's Monitoring Officer, in order to provide the Town and Community Council Forum with an update regarding the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill, together with an Action Plan to ensure that the Council is prepared for the various elements of the Bill that will come into force in due course.

She explained that the Bill was passed by the Senedd on 18th November 2020, and would receive Royal Assent in January 2021. It was a substantial piece of legislation covering a number of key elements of work.

The new approach, as set out in the Bill, was designed to be a more streamlined, flexible, sector-led approach to performance, good governance and improvement. The intention was for Councils to be proactive in considering how internal processes and procedures should change to enable more effective planning, delivery and decision making in order to drive better outcomes.

In summary the Monitoring Officer outlined, that the Bill would introduce the following:

- Reforming Electoral Arrangements for local government;
- General Power of Competence;
- Reforming public participation in local government;
- Reforms around democratic governance and leadership;
- Reform of the performance and governance regime;
- Collaborative Working; and
- Voluntary Mergers of principal councils

It was anticipated that the Bill would receive Royal Assent in January 2021.

The 'Coming into Force' provisions of the Bill were complex explained the Monitoring Officer, with some provisions coming into force within days of Royal Assent, others within months, and the majority via Ministerial Statutory Instrument. Welsh Government will be developing a clear outline timetable for implementation for local authorities. The bulk however, would come into force in conjunction with the County Borough Elections in May 2022. Bespoke training sessions would be offered to Town/Community Council's on key elements of the Bill, which also affected their ways of working, at appropriate future dates, added the Monitoring Officer

Attached to the report at Appendix 1, was an Action Plan to ensure that the Council was prepared for the introduction of the Bill. The Action Plan will be updated accordingly as various provisions of the Bill come into force, she concluded.

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RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Forum noted the report and Action Plan attached at Appendix 1 to the report
- (2) Noted also that further reports on individual elements of the Bill will be submitted to the Forum in due course, should this be considered necessary.

205. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items in terms of written reports accepted as such by the Leader and Chairperson. However, he invited the Monitoring Officer to update the Forum on some proposed training planned for the immediate future.

The Monitoring Officer confirmed that BCBC Members, had recently received Code of Conduct training from an external provider. She advised that it was now planned to extend two further sessions of this to Town/Community Councillors at the end of March/early April. She urged Members to sign-up for this training, dates for which would be firmed-up and conveyed to them, in the next week or so.

The meeting closed at 18:10