

TOWN & COMMUNITY COUNCIL FORUM - MONDAY, 6 MARCH 2023

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE TOWN & COMMUNITY COUNCIL FORUM HELD REMOTELY - VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON MONDAY, 6 MARCH 2023 AT 16:00

Present

Councillor HJ David – Chairperson

H T Bennett	E L P Caparros	C Davies	C L C Davies
S Easterbrook	M J Evans	P Ford	J Gebbie
RM Granville	M R John	L Lewis	R J Smith
I M Spiller	JH Tildesley MBE	MJ Williams	E D Winstanley
T Wood			

Officers:

Julie Ellams	Democratic Services Officer - Committees
Mark Galvin	Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees
Rachel Keepins	Democratic Services Manager
Michael Pitman	Technical Support Officer – Democratic Services
Mark Shephard	Chief Executive
Guy Smith	Community Asset Transfer Officer
Sue Whittaker	Skills and Sustainable Development Manager

11. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor R Smith declared a prejudicial interest in Agenda item 5, as he was a Director of a company that was a recipient of a Warm Hub grant.

Councillor H Bennett declared a prejudicial interest in Agenda item 5, as an employer of an organisation that was administering the grants.

Councillor E Winstanley declared a prejudicial interest in Agenda item 5, as an employer of an organisation that was administering the grants.

Councillor S Parker declared a personal interest in Agenda item 5, as his wife was a member of Cornelly Warm Hubs who have also been in receipt of a grant.

12. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of a meeting of the Town and Community Council Forum dated 21 November 2022, be approved as a true and accurate record.

13. CORPORATE PLAN 2023-28

The Corporate Policy and Public Affairs Manager presented a report, in order to provide an update on the Council's Corporate Plan and seek support from the Town and Community Council Forum on sharing the Corporate Plan 2023-28, that was attached at Appendix 1 to the covering report. This was due to be reported to Council later this month.

She confirmed that there are 7 wellbeing goals for Wales, set out in the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, and the Council like other local authorities, needed to demonstrate our contribution to each of these goals, which are –

- A prosperous Wales

TOWN & COMMUNITY COUNCIL FORUM - MONDAY, 6 MARCH 2023

- A resilient Wales
- A healthier Wales
- A more equal Wales
- A Wales of cohesive communities
- A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language
- A globally responsible Wales

The Corporate Policy and Public Affairs Manager added, that the Council must also consider the 5 ways of working as it develops the new Corporate Plan. These were –

- Long term - balancing short-term needs with the need to safeguard the ability to also meet long-term needs
- Prevention - acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse to help the Council meet its objectives
- Integration – thinking about how its wellbeing goals will contribute to the 7 national goals, on its other objectives and on partners objectives.
- Collaboration – working across different parts of the Council and partners to achieve its objectives
- Involvement - involving people with an interest in achieving the well-being goals, and ensuring those people reflect the diversity of its area.

The Corporate Plan is the Council's main vehicle for demonstrating and communicating the priorities to local people and businesses. It was also an important part of the assurance framework for its regulators. Audit Wales intend to test approaches to developing the Corporate Plan (especially the well-being objectives) across Wales over the next 6 months. These Objectives were outlined in paragraph 3.5 of the report.

Welsh Government were also taking a keen interest in the development of well-being objectives, in line with the evolution of the Social Partnership Bill and guidance. They are keen to see evidence of the Council working with staff and Trade Unions on the development of its well-being objectives and plan.

The Corporate Policy and Public Affairs Manager then outlined some of the work that had been undertaken or was required, such as in relation to:

- Use of research, data and information to inform the Corporate Plan;
- Use of engagement, involvement and consultation to inform the Corporate Plan.

Further detail regarding the work carried out in these areas, was explained in the report, including feedback in terms of consultation both internally, for example through the Overview and Scrutiny process and externally with stakeholders, such as constituents, the Public Service Board and the Youth Council.

Following the consultation process, some changes had been made to the Corporate Plan based on the feedback received, such as:

- Rewriting the principles, and changing the icons that represent them, so they are more positive, aspirational and forward looking
- Adding a small section on context to each wellbeing objective to demonstrate the link with specific council services
- Reconfiguring the diagram on the Council's finances to reflect costs per day (per household)
- Adding references to town centres and Porthcawl
- Adding information in Wellbeing Objective 2 to focus on staff welfare, recruitment and pay.

- Adding information in Wellbeing Objective 6 to focus on listening to and responding to residents' views
- Adding information on youth employment, and the music service.

The Corporate Policy and Public Affairs Manager gave a power point presentation in support of the report.

Members of the Forum gratefully asked for the Corporate Plan to be shared with Town and Community Councils and the Corporate Policy and Public Affairs Manager confirmed that she would arrange this and, if necessary, either herself or members of her team could come along to talk on this for the benefit of Members.

A Member also felt that it would be advantageous to use the Corporate Plan as an opportunity to allow, where appropriate, Town and Community Councils to deliver some of the services included in the Plan, through joint working arrangements.

RESOLVED: That the Town and Community Council Forum, noted the Corporate Plan 2023-28 presented for approval to Council on 1 March as attached at Appendix 1 of the report.

14. **COST OF LIVING / WARM HUBS**

The Cost of Living Co-ordinator (Employability Bridgend) presented a report, the purpose of which, was to provide the Town and Community Council Forum with an update on the cost-of-living support activity, more specifically Warm Hubs, being provided to communities across Bridgend County Borough.

By way of some background information, she advised that the impact of the rising cost of living affects everyone but there are groups who are likely to be hardest hit. These people spend a greater proportion of their total income on food, housing and energy costs and therefore have less flexibility to meet increased costs. Those who were able to balance their budgets instead start struggling or find themselves in crisis.

Issues with older housing stock means many homes are relatively less energy efficient. In rural areas homes are more likely to be reliant on solid fuel, oil, or LPG for their heating. These are all factors that increase energy costs.

The Cost of Living Co-ordinator confirmed, that in April 2022 the domestic energy price cap was increased to £1,971 per year leading the Welsh Government to estimate that up to 45% of households could be in fuel poverty and up to 8% of households could be in severe fuel poverty. As 1 in 5 homes in Wales posed an unacceptable risk to health prior to the cost-of-living crisis the increase in households affected by fuel poverty is likely to increase excess winter deaths overall.

In September 2022, in response to the escalating cost of living crisis, specifically the increasing cost of energy, Welsh Government announced £1m of funding would be made available to support communities to develop Warm Hubs or expand and enhance Warm Hub provision.

Then in October 2022 it was announced that the funding would be distributed via local authorities who would work with local partners in the development and delivery of Warm Hubs. Bridgend County Borough Council was allocated £44,590 to support Warm Hubs through a grant scheme to be spent by 31 March 2023.

She explained that Warm Hubs are intended as places in local communities where people can find a safe and warm environment during the day to help reduce the cost of

heating their own homes and to help people facing extreme fuel poverty this winter. Depending on their location and facilities, Warm Hubs offer a range of support including basic refreshments and snacks as a minimum, extending to a more substantive meal where possible, enrichment activities such as arts and crafts, exercise and cultural activity and the provision of advice and support services such as health and wellbeing, financial matters, and digital accessibility for those who attend.

The aim of the Warm Hubs fund is to provide safe, accessible, friendly, free to use spaces to provide support with the rising cost of living whilst helping communities to be well and stay as such.

To facilitate the allocation of grant funding a scoping exercise was undertaken across the County Borough. To reflect the diversity of local communities across the County Borough and help to address the unique challenges in different areas, a series of local meetings were held. 11 meetings were organised, and efforts were made to invite representatives from community groups, town and community councils, community venues, Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) Councillors and Third Sector organisation including Halo and Awen.

The purpose of the scoping meetings was to discuss community solutions to the rising cost of domestic energy, identifying and capturing information on the support and activities already available to avoid future duplication and create a position to build from. Following the meetings, circulation lists for each area were created to assist with future communication both to and between local representatives. The mailing groups had been an effective way of gathering further information and sharing local knowledge and updates on Warm Hubs.

The Cost of Living Co-ordinator advised that funding was drawn down from the WLGA and agreement was subsequently made with Bridgend Association of Voluntary Organisations (BAVO) in January 2023 to provide the administration of the funds. BAVO's role extends to the advertising of the Warm Hubs funding scheme and the collation of applications, with BCBC responsible for the decision making through a Grant Panel, and monitoring and reporting to WLGA.

The BCBC Grant Panel is comprised of the Employability and Enterprise Manager, Group Manager – Sports and Physical Activity Prevention and Wellbeing and the Cost of Living Co-ordinator. The Grant Panel has been able to agree applications quickly, meeting twice weekly since the grant fund was opened. Applications to the fund have now exceeded the amount of funding available from Welsh Government and over 30 recipients have received Warm Hubs funding. Additional funds are being made available through BCBC's Discretionary Cost of Living Funds.

Officers from Employability then responded to questions from Members and further details regarding this can be found [here](#)

RESOLVED: That the Town and Community Council Forum noted the report.

15. **URGENT ITEMS**

None.