

TOWN & COMMUNITY COUNCIL FORUM - TUESDAY, 27 NOVEMBER 2018

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE TOWN & COMMUNITY COUNCIL FORUM HELD IN COUNCIL CHAMBER - CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB ON TUESDAY, 27 NOVEMBER 2018 AT 16:00

Present

Councillor CE Smith – Chairperson

S Aspey	SE Baldwin	JPD Blundell	MC Clarke
N Clarke	P Davies	Cllr R Davies	Cllr D Evans
RM Granville	Cllr P Jenkins	C Jones	B Jones
RL Penhale-Thomas	AA Pucella	KL Rowlands	B Sedgebeer
SG Smith	KJ Watts		

Apologies for Absence

HJ David and Lyddon

Officers:

Mark Galvin	Senior Democratic Services Officer – Committees
Gill Lewis	Interim Section 151 Officer
Jean Gregson	Corporate Improvement Support Officer
Guy Smith	Community Asset Transfer Officer

165. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

166. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of a meeting of the Town and Community Council Forum dated 27 November 2018, be approved as a true and accurate record.

167. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (MTFS) 2019/20 TO 2022/23

The Interim Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer presented a report, in order to provide Members with an update on the Medium Term Financial Plan.

By way of background information, she explained that the draft MTFS which had been submitted to Cabinet on 20 November 2018 (attached at Appendix A to the report) had been significantly guided by the Council's revised priorities of, Supporting a Successful Economy, Helping People to be more Self-Reliant and Making Smarter Use of Resources.

She referred to the Budget Narrative, which aimed to articulate the continued and significant investment in public services that the Council will make going forward. It also set out how the Council aims to change particular areas of service delivery and the financial consequences of this.

This Appendix then gave a financial overview, following which the Interim Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer gave a resume of how much budget is allocated to each of its key service areas of follows:-

- Education

- Social Care and Early Help
- Public Realm
- Supporting the Economy
- Other Services

The Interim Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer confirmed that the Council's MTFS was set within the context of UK economic and public expenditure plans, Welsh Government's priorities and legislative programme.

She explained about the Welsh Government's draft budget announced by the Finance Secretary on 2 October 2018, and how this affected local authorities in Wales including BCBC. Since then Central Government in its Autumn budget on 29 October, confirmed that Welsh Government will receive an extra £550m over the years 2018-19 to 2020-21.

The next section of the report's attachment, advised what the above settlements meant for this Authority, which reflected for 2019-20 an overall reduction of £1.616m or -0.84%. Welsh Government also indicated that the settlement contained an additional £20m to ease pressures on Social Services. If this was also taken into account, the real position for Bridgend was a reduction of -1.3% or £2.5m. The settlement also included £2.5m floor funding to ensure that no Authority has to manage with a reduction of greater than 1% to its Revenue Support Grant next year.

Overall the provisional settlement was in line with the -1.5% "most likely" assumption that is contained within the Council's original MTFS 2019-20, but it did not recognise a number of new pressures that the Council will have to meet.

The next section of the Appendix, outlined reasons why there was a need to combat financial pressures the Council have to face in the coming year, by having to consider an increase of 5.4% in Council Tax.

Paragraph 4.11 of the Appendix then showed in Table 1, a comparison of budget against projected outturn at 30 September 2019, that reflected a net underspend of £2.551m.

Table 2 in paragraph 4.17 of the Appendix, showed details of an MTFS proposal supported by Budget Reductions Contingency Reserve in 2018-19, which was in the sum of £200k for MREC.

The Appendix then gave an outline of the MTFS forecast for the next 4 years, showing that the Council would still be likely to achieve a budget reduction overall in each of these years of around -1.5%. This in real terms meant that over this period it would have to find a total of £33.645m on a 'best case scenario' or £44.648m for 'worse case.'

Table 5 of the Appendix reflected the current position in addressing the most likely forecast budget reduction requirement of £36.439m. This showed that despite the savings made thus far, the Council were still required to develop proposals in order to achieve a further £21.3m in reductions (not yet accounted for).

The Interim Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer then made reference to the Budget Reduction Proposals identified in the current MTFS (Table 6 in the Appendix) and the Draft Revenue Budget as it presently stood (Table 7).

A full breakdown of budget pressures was shown at pages 43/44 of the overall report.

She confirmed that budget reduction proposals of £8.836m had been identified from service and corporate budgets to achieve a balanced budget. These were outlined in Appendix B of the Cabinet report.

Table 9 in paragraph 4.39 of the Appendix gave a summary of Usable Earmarked Reserves, whilst Table 10 showed Annual Allocations of Capital Funding.

The Interim Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer then concluded her submission by referring to the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 Assessment as were detailed in Appendix c to the attached report.

A Member noted that non-statutory public facing services had been the subject of some repeated cuts as part of the MTFs reductions over the last few years, and he noted that areas such as the following were going to be subjected to further cuts, in order to protect more statutory services provided by the Council:-

- Rationalising Play Areas
- Removal of Council subsidy in respect of certain bus routes
- Certain Street Cleaning services

In terms of street scrubbing, he also asked if any equipment that the local authority were going to dispose of could be passed to Town/Community Councils in order that they could provide this service.

The Interim Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer confirmed that she would raise these points with the Corporate Director – Communities and in turn, provide a written response to the Member outside of the meeting.

She did add however, that both statutory and non-statutory services that the Council provided, would be subject to budget cuts as part of the MTFs, and that every Directorate and most service areas of the Council would be required to face reductions.

The Chairperson in respect of Children's Play Areas, confirmed that some of the larger statutory areas were not the subject of closure as these needed to be provided as part of the Public Realm. However, smaller areas had to be delegated to Town/Community Councils in order for them to choose whether or not to keep these open and to also maintain them up to the required standard.

With regard to bus services, he advised that there was no guarantee that commercial operators would carry on providing services along some routes (the less used ones) once the Council removed subsidies.

The Community Asset Transfer Officer advised that if the Council had surplus assets it could no longer continue providing due to financial restraints, then discussions could take place with the local Town/Community Council in order to ascertain whether or not they had any interest in taking over the responsibility of these.

A Member asked whether or not there was any intention of closing the Bridgend Bus Station due to there being limited resources to keep this facility open.

The Chairperson advised that no date had been set for the closure of this, though if the Council had no improved settlement from Welsh Government then this may need re-visiting, as it presently cost the Council in the region of £90k to operate.

The Interim Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer pointed out to Members, that certain preventative measures would be looked at in order hopefully not to overspend in

statutory services, which would in turn possibly alleviate further cuts having to be made to certain public facing non-statutory services.

A Member felt that increased effort should be made between BCBC and Town/Community Councils through avenues of consultation, in order to provide some services collaboratively, including also through joint funding initiatives.

A Member advised that it was difficult timing wise for Town/Community Councils to set their precept at a level whereby they could assist the local authority in the above, when considering that they had to do this in November, prior to the date BCBC firmed-up its proposals in respect of the MTFS in December. The Council's Budget was then established in February/March at Cabinet and Council, in any given year. The timings of the two therefore were untimely.

RESOLVED: That the Town and Community Council Forum noted the MTFS Strategy 2019/20 to 2022/23.

168. **BRIDGEND PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD (PSB) ASSETS BOARD**

The Partnership Co-ordinator presented a report on behalf of the Chief Executive, the purpose of which, was to seek nominations from the Town and Community Council Forum, for a representative to join the Bridgend Public Services Board (PSB) Assets Sub-Board.

The Partnership Co-ordinator referred to paragraph 4.1 of the report where it outlined the current member organisations that comprised the PSB and paragraph 4.2 which advised, that following the publication of the Wellbeing Plan the PSB developed its partnership delivery structure. This structure consisted of five delivery boards, including the already established (statutory) Community Safety Partnership. The added delivery boards were Children, Young People and Families, Bridgend Learning Partnership, Wellbeing and Bridgend Assets.

She proceeded by confirming that the Bridgend Assets Sub-Board was responsible for ensuring the effective delivery of the Wellbeing Objective 'Healthy Choices in a Healthy Environment.' This objective (and the Sub-Board) focussed on the Bridgend County as a 'place' and on the strengths and challenges of individual communities.

The Partnership Co-ordinator continued, by stating that Bridgend PSB recognised the important role Town and Community Councils play in improving the well-being of Bridgend. She added that the PSB would welcome greater representation and support from the Town and Community Council Forum in delivering the Wellbeing Plan, by inviting a representative to join the Bridgend Assets Sub-Board.

Appendix 1 to the report contained the Bridgend Wellbeing Plan, and this clearly set out how the wellbeing objectives contributed to the 7 wellbeing goals outlined in the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015.

The plan outlined how the PSB will act in accordance with the sustainable development principle by ensuring that by meeting the needs of the present, they do not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This would be achieved through the 5 ways of working which are evidenced throughout the Bridgend Wellbeing Plan.

Members felt that it would be advantageous to have two Members on the Bridgend Assets Sub-Board as opposed to the recommended one, and further considered that

this should be in the form of one Town Council Member of the Forum and one Community Council Member.

Following nominations being made, duly seconded and carried unanimously by way of ascent, it was

RECOMMENDED: That Councillors S Baldwin and JP Blundell be nominated by the Town and Community Council Forum to sit as Members of the Forum on the Bridgend Assets Sub-Board.

169. **COLLABORATION WITH TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCILS**

The Corporate Director – Communities submitted a report, the purpose of which, was to initiate debate with Town and Community Councils (TCCs) and gauge appetite for collaborative working with Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC).

By way of background information, the Chairperson of Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 who presented the report, confirmed that it has been highlighted that BCBC should work closer in partnership with TCCs in a bid to maintain community services that are at risk of future budget cuts and to ensure the best services and outcomes for the citizens of Bridgend.

On 22 October 2018 he confirmed that Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 received a report (attached at Appendix A), that detailed the outcome of the Independent Review Panel in relation to TCCs and the impact the implementation the recommendations would have on BCBC.

Several comments and recommendations were made by Members at the above Committee meeting (see Appendix B to the report), which included the suggestion for the submission of the report, along with the outcomes of the meeting to the Town and Community Council Forum.

The Chairperson of the Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3, then picked out some salient points contained in the reports Appendices, such as for example:-

- That Bridgend had 100% coverage of TCCs which compared favourably with neighbouring authorities;
- A total precept of £2.5m had been generated by TCCs in the Bridgend County Borough in 2018/19;
- He felt that attendance levels needed to improve at future meetings of the Forum, particularly by nominated representatives of TCCs;
- The possibility of the Town and Community Council Forum meeting more frequently than quarterly, in order to ensure momentum and consistent monitoring of any future collaborative work between the two tiers of Authority; and
- Detailing the number of CAT projects either completed or in the process of being considered
- The comments and recommendations made by Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 at its meeting on 22 October 2018, on the topic of ‘Collaboration with Town and Community Councils.’

The Chairperson advised that Welsh Government had undertaken a review of the role provided by Town/Community Councils, and through the suggestion of a Member, he felt that it would be advantageous if a representative from Welsh Government be invited to

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the next/a future meeting of the Forum, to explain to Members the outcomes of the review so conducted.

He referred Members to page 97/overleaf of the report and of the services and amenities currently being provided by TCCs which were considerable in the support of respective communities. In addition to what had already been done, this section of the report confirmed that a total of 71 TCCs confirmed their intention to take on services in the next 12 months, for example, maintenance of playing fields/village greens/other open space, public conveniences, village halls/community centres and playgrounds/areas and play equipment.

A Member felt also that skills of TCC Clerks was important, as well as TCCs taking on work collectively through providing services through joint funding and pooling of precepts, including on behalf of BCBC.

A Member was also of the opinion, that the Town and Community Council Forum should not only meet more often, but also have greater powers in order to determine issues and take things forward, as opposed to just noting reports on topical issues that came before it.

RESOLVED: That the Town and Community Council Forum noted the recommendations previously proposed by Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3, attached at Appendix 3 to the report.

170. **URGENT ITEMS**

None.

The meeting closed at 17:34