

TOWN & COMMUNITY COUNCIL FORUM - TUESDAY, 26 FEBRUARY 2019

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE TOWN & COMMUNITY COUNCIL FORUM HELD IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND, CF31 4WB ON TUESDAY, 26 FEBRUARY 2019 AT 16:00

Present

Councillor HJ David – Chairperson

SE Baldwin	H Bennett	JPD Blundell	N Clarke
P Davies	Cllr R Davies	Cllr S Dendy	Cllr L Desmond-Williams
Cllr D Evans	RM Granville	Cllr P Jenkins	RL Penhale-Thomas
AA Pucella	CE Smith	KJ Watts	W Willis

Apologies for Absence

MC Clarke, B Jones, A Mckay and RE Young

Officers:

Mark Galvin	Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees
Michael Pitman	Business & Administrative Apprentice

172. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

173. 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.

174. THE FUTURE ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY AND TOWN COUNCIL SECTOR IN WALES

The Leader and Chairperson welcomed to the meeting Claire Germain, Head of Local Government Partnerships, Welsh Government (WG), in order that she could give a power point presentation on the above topic.

The presentation included the following slides:-

Commissioning a Review

Independent review set-up in 2017 to consider the future role of Community and Town Councils.

Cross-party Panel, with wider expertise/experience drawn in.

Given 12 months to:

- Explore the potential role of local government below Local Authority Councils, drawing on best practice;
- Define the most appropriate model(s)/structure(s) to deliver this role;

- Consider how these models and structures should be applied across Wales. This will include consideration of any situations in which they would not be necessary or appropriate.

Undertaking the Review

Involved extensive engagement and evidence gathering, including:

1. Regular Panel meetings including taking evidence;
2. Wide range of oral and written evidence from stakeholders – gathering as many views as possible through a range of engagement activity;
3. Consideration of wider evidence (data, reports, research, etc);
4. Newsletters updating on progress and opportunities to engage.

Findings and Recommendations

The Panel set out views on:

- What Community and Town Councils are;
- What Community and Town Councils do;
- How Community and Town Councils do it;
- How Community and Town Councils are held to account

Final report submitted in October 2018.

Continuing the conversation

Written statement issued on 31 November 2018, setting out Welsh Government's policy approach:

1. Encouraging and enabling change to happen naturally;
2. Providing an element of choice about how far, and how fast, a Council decides to move;
3. Creating an environment for Councils to expand their activities where they feel they could/should

Welsh Government Areas for Action

Areas where we can, and will, take action immediately and areas that require further consideration and consultation

Theme

Clarifying the role of the sector:

Immediate action

Undertake a campaign to:

- Confirm important role of sector;
- Raise awareness of the work of Town/Community Councils (including in areas that don't have them);
- Raise awareness of the benefits of establishing new Town/Community Councils;
- Encourage Town/Community Councils to reflect on what is required locally, in terms of the kinds of services they could deliver.

Further consideration

1. Alongside raising awareness of the benefits of establishing new Town/Community Councils, explore other models which could provide a focus for communities in urban areas;
2. Consider further the usefulness of a 'placed base services' distinction, the appetite for change and the pace that it could be sustained;
3. Consider consulting on the merits of retaining (dual hatted) Councillors

Increasing democracy and participation:

Immediate action

- Use existing powers to ensure Community Reviews are conducted on a regular basis;
- Establish a better understanding of use of social media by Town/Community Councils, to engage their community and facilitate sharing of good practice;
- Undertake a campaign to encourage more people to stand for election.

Further consideration

1. Consider and potentially consult on the need for a comprehensive review of Town/Community Council boundaries, recognising any action in future would require a different legislative vehicle;
2. Consider whether to ensure that elections should be held regardless of whether seats are contested, balancing stimulating the democratic process with cost;
3. Explore what more can be done to promote diversity amongst Councillors;
4. Allow the lower minimum voting age of 16 years to embed (should it go ahead), before considering whether to lower the minimum age to stand as a Town/Community Council candidate to 16 years;
5. Consider how local engagement and public participation has been affected in England, following the introduction of the duty on Parish Councils to hold at least one public meeting per year.

A Member felt that smaller Community Councils found it difficult to assist the Local Authority they served, ie in providing or supporting services, including some financial support for these from their precept allocation. He felt that within the BCB, there could be some merit in reducing the number of Town/Community Councils and/or combining adjoining ones in order for them to be more robust and valued.

He added that some of the smaller ones were finding it difficult working in isolation.

The WG representative advised that there were certain areas within Wales that had none or very few Town/Community Councils, for example, Merthyr only had one, and there were only a small few in the County Borough of Rhondda Cynon Taf. She agreed that the review needed to look at the sustainability and robustness of Town/Community Councils, particularly with regard to, (in these times of austerity), services they could provide for the communities they serve.

She added that Town/Community Council boundaries were being looked at as part of the review also and she added that WG would encourage any proposals of certain Town/Community Councils working jointly or collaboratively, in the support of constituents as part of a type of Federalisation.

A Member also made the point that more money should be made available for Town/Community Councils, to financially support any paid posts they have, such as the Clerk's salary.

A Member felt that the above was an important point to make, given that there was a huge difference in the precepts of, for example, Bridgend Town Council which was in the region of £550k per annum and Merthymawr Community Council which was £4,800k.

The WG representative advised the Forum that there was certain funding streams that were available for Town/Community Councils (from WG) and she would send details of these to all Clerks outside of the meeting, in order that they could share details of these with their Members.

Prior to debate concluding on this item, the WG representative encouraged all Town/Community Councils to engage with WG on their vision of the future role of Town/Community Councils in Wales as part of a continued consultation process moving forward, until such review reaches its conclusion.

The Leader (and Chairperson) on behalf of Members, thanked Ms Germain for attending the meeting and providing such an informative and detailed presentation.

RESOLVED: That Members noted the presentation from the Head of Local Government Partnerships, Welsh Government.

175. **THE BRIDGEND REPLACEMENT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (LDP) CANDIDATE SITE REGISTER**

The Corporate Director – Communities presented a report, the purpose of which, was to inform the Forum of the register of Candidate Sites (attached at Appendix 1) which have been received from interested parties following a call for such sites to be submitted between 14 September 2018 and 9 November 2018.

The Development Planning Team Leader advised that the Bridgend Replacement Local Development Plan (LDP) is a high level strategy which must be prepared by the Council. The LDP sets out in land-use terms all the priorities and objectives of the Corporate Plan. The future Replacement LDP will be required to express in land-use terms the wellbeing objectives and priorities of the Bridgend Public Services Board's Wellbeing Plan.

The call for sites was advertised as was detailed in paragraph 3.2 of the report and by the closing date of 9 November 2018, 172 sites had been duly submitted and collated into a 'Candidate Site Register' appended to the report.

The report detailed the next steps in terms of process of this document.

The Development Planning Team Leader stressed to Members, that it is important to reiterate at this stage that the publication of any site in this Candidate Site Register does not confirm any status or suggestion that it will be taken forward for inclusion within pre-deposit proposals or the deposit LDP nor does it imply any preference of the Local Planning Authority regarding its merits. This includes any sites submitted by internal Departments of the Council.

He also emphasised that this register is not a public consultation document but rather it is a factual compilation of the sites which have been submitted.

Paragraph 4.8 of the report gave information as to the methods by which the Development Planning Team has publicised and made the register available.

The Development Planning Team Leader advised that the cost of the Replacement LDP would be met from the Development Planning budget and carried out by Development Planning staff with expert advice and evidence procured from consultants and through collaboration with neighbouring authorities as required.

The Group Manager – Planning and Development Services confirmed that all Town and Community Councils would be visited and from time to time updated as part of the LDP process going forward.

RESOLVED: The Town and Community Council Forum noted the report and the contents of the Candidate Site Register.

176. **BRIDGEND REPLACEMENT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (LDP) 2018-2033, DRAFT VISION AND OBJECTIVES, GROWTH AND SPATIAL OPTIONS**

The Development Planning Manager presented a report to the Development Control Committee on the draft vision and objectives, growth and spatial strategy options for the Bridgend Replacement Local Development Plan (LDP).

He explained that the 3 technical reports (attached as appendices A, B and C to the covering report) provided background information in respect of the draft vision and objectives, growth options and spatial strategy options proposed for the Replacement LDP.

It is intended that these technical reports will inform the ongoing pre-deposit engagement and participation in and also inform the preparation of the preferred strategy and subsequent stages of plan preparation:

- Technical Report 1: Draft Vision and Objectives (attached as Appendix A);
- Technical Report 2: Draft Strategic Growth Options (attached as Appendix B);
- Technical Report 3: Draft Spatial Strategy Options (attached as Appendix C).

The next sections of the report, outlined executive summaries of the above Technical Reports, and the Development Planning Manager gave a resume of the key points of each for the benefit of Members.

The Development Planning Manager then gave a power point presentation, which gave further information on this topic as follows:-

Bridgend County Borough will continue to be transformed to become a sustainable, safe, healthy and inclusive network of communities comprising strong, interdependent, connected and cohesive settlements that can offer people:

- The best start in life by providing effective learning environments to secure the best possible outcomes for learners;
- Provide opportunities to reduce social and economic inequalities;
- An improved quality of life and a healthy environment for all people living, working, visiting and relaxing in the area.

The revised LDP Vision would be delivered through 4 Strategic Objectives, ie:-

1. To create High Quality Sustainable Places (Placemaking).
2. To create Active, Healthy, Cohesive and Social communities

3. To create Productive and Enterprising Places.
4. To Protect and Enhance our Distinctive and Natural Places.

The LDP when fully established, would assist the following:-

- Increase Sustainability
- Create new, affordable homes
- Support future generations
- Assist employment opportunities
- Assist the viability of our town centres
- Help the environment
- Give regeneration opportunities
- Enhance green infrastructures
- Support Education
- Prevent inappropriate development

There were three growth options that were being looked at, and these were classified as High, Medium and Low, and Officers explained that the Medium growth option was the preferred one. Some of the key points of this option were:-

Background

- Looked at past birth, death and migration trends
- Translated into households, dwellings and jobs
- Analysed a range of different scenarios to arrive at three growth options
- Underpin the Local Development Plan

Mid Growth Option; +505 dwellings, +266 jobs

- Welsh Government Projection Plus Mid-Year Estimates
- Trends from 2011/12 - 2016/17, akin to build rate
- Higher net migration flows
- Younger age profile, growth in 35-44 age category
- Job creation through skilled workforce

Recommend Mid Growth Option (for the following reasons)

- Sustainable growth levels to secure investment
- Established working households attracted
- Employers enticed by young, skilled workforce
- Secure integrated affordable housing
- Improve general market affordability via supply

Of the headline Spatial Options for growth, these were as follows, with Option 4 being recommended, on the basis of this being a hybrid of the other 3:-

- Option 1** – Continuation of the existing LDP Regeneration led Strategy;
- Option 2** – Public Transport Hubs and Strategic Road Corridors (growth is directed to major public transport hubs and the strategic highway network (M4)
- Option 3** – Prioritise growth to the north of the M4 – a Valleys led Strategy
- Option 4** – Regeneration and Sustainable Growth – led Strategy

With regards to potential sites (to secure growth), in conclusion, the Development Planning Manager confirmed the following:-

1. Preferred Strategy Document will identify potentially suitable broad areas – for strategic sites - not specific sites;
2. Further assessment however is required;
3. Chosen sites need to be Deliverable Sites.

Following the presentation, Planning Officers then responded to questions from Members.

RESOLVED: That the Forum noted the contents of Technical Reports 1, 2 and 3 (attached as Appendices A, B and C to the report), as the basis for preparing the Preferred Strategy document that will be published for formal public consultation in October/November 2019.

177. **URGENT ITEMS**

None.

The meeting closed at 18:06