

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT TO TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCIL FORUM

17 MARCH 2020

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCIL FORUM REVIEW

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To set out a new vision for the relationship between Town and Community Councils and Bridgend County Borough Council moving forward and as a result, a new mechanism for effective engagement, to replace the current Town and Community Council (TCC) Forum.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives/Other Corporate Priorities

- 2.1 The report assists in the achievement of the following corporate priorities:

- Smarter use of resources – ensuring that all its resources (financial, physical, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the development of resources throughout the community that can help deliver the Council's priorities.

3. Background

- 3.1 The current TCC Forum meets quarterly and is chaired by the Leader of the Council. Invitations to attend are extended to representatives of all Town and Community Councils throughout the County Borough. Requests for agenda items are made to all Councils and other reports are also brought forward by officers of the Council when it is timely to do so. In addition, a separate meeting is held with the Clerks of Town and Community Councils on a regular basis.
- 3.2 Unfortunately, representations have been made to the Chief Executive that the current forum meetings are often ineffective, characterised by relatively poor attendance and engagement, a limited number of relevant agenda items being brought forward, and seemingly either apathy or occasionally animosity towards attempts to use the forum as a means to improve engagement and working relationships between TCC's and BCBC. This clearly leads to frustration on both sides and had led to calls from some political Group Leaders within the Council to review the current arrangements.
- 3.3 The Council has set out a vision of how it needs to be different and act differently to sustain the provision of valuable public services in the face of continuing and prolonged austerity and increased demands caused by both legislative and demographic pressures. In addition Welsh Government has set

out the need for an enhanced role for the tier of government below Unitary Authorities in recognition of the important role they can play, particularly with regard to 'place' based services and their inherent closeness to the local communities they serve.

- 3.4 For BCBC this means the Council is seeking to create an environment where it actively looks to have ongoing meaningful and effective community engagement, and to give local communities and stakeholders more say in how their money is spent, and create sustainable local solutions to the delivery of services. This means the Council will often be playing an enhanced enabling or facilitating role, supporting local community groups and TCC's to take on greater responsibility for the management of local services, in line with both the principles of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Council's Wellbeing Priority of building resilient communities which are less dependent on the Council.
- 3.5 This new relationship should be characterised by enhanced collaboration and partnerships with TCCs, often with co-production of mutually beneficial solutions.

4. Current situation / proposal

4.1 From a BCBC point of view the Council needs to do the following;

- Invest in better and enhanced engagement and liaison.
- Ensure better mutual understanding with TCCs.
- Target support and advice to enable TCCs to take on more (eg CAT).
- Streamline our processes to make working together simpler and more effective
- Recognise and determine who can do what best and in a financially sustainable way moving forward (and consider transferring funding as well as services to TCCs).

4.2 From a TCC point of view they need to do the following;

- Rise to the challenge more consistently and show local leadership by recognising their role will be different and potentially more important with more responsibility (use of precept etc).
- Consider merging or federating so that they are the right size to make a difference but maintain 'localism', and/or work together so that economies of scale can be achieved.
- Play a local coordination role with clubs and organisations.
- Recognise and determine who can do what best and in a financially sustainable way.

4.3 There is the potential to develop local contracts or deals between a relevant TCC and BCBC setting out areas of responsibility, funding and mutual assistance. In this way the roles of BCBC and TCC's will be clearer and better defined and should lead to better partnership working for the benefit of local people.

- 4.4 However, for this to become a reality a different and more purposeful vehicle is needed than the current TCC Forum.

It is proposed therefore that a new BCBC/TCC partnership Board is formed, with a single representative from each TCC invited, together with senior elected member and officer representation from BCBC. In addition the current CAT officer role will be extended to incorporate an ongoing liaison and support role for TCCs (additional support will be brought in specifically for the CAT programme so this is not put at detriment).

- 4.5 The purpose of the Board will importantly be to agree an annual work programme to progress and implement the vision and objectives set out above. It will therefore have much clearer outputs and outcomes and will not deal with operational and transactional concerns (these will need to be picked up as part of referrals etc or separate meetings).
- 4.6 Terms of reference and full details of the Board would need to be agreed but the purpose is to ensure we have a vehicle to more effectively work together in recognition of the changing role of both types of organisation.
- 4.7 There may potentially be some 'kick back' about the less public nature of 'Board' meetings but there is no reason why the minutes of such meetings should not be made public and scrutinised accordingly.
- 4.8 An initial discussion took place at the Group Leaders meeting on December 18th to help shape the proposal with the intention that it was then brought to the next meeting of the TCC clerks and the TCC Forum in March 2020, and if necessary for the changes to be approved at the AGM so that the Board can be established fully for the financial year 2020/21.
- 4.9 The views of the Forum are sought to help shape and inform any proposal for a new BCBC/TCC Partnership Board to replace the existing TCC Forum.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules

- 5.1 There is no effect upon the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules.

6. Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.1 There are no equality implications arising from this report.

7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 Assessment

- 7.1 The report contributes to the following goals within the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015:
- A prosperous Wales
 - A resilient Wales
 - A Wales of cohesive communities
 - A globally responsive Wales

8. Financial Implications

8.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

9 Recommendations

9.1 It is recommended that the Forum consider the report and inform any proposal for a new BCBC/TCC Partnership Board to replace the existing TCC Forum.

Contact Officer:

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Background Documents:

None