

TOWN & COMMUNITY COUNCIL FORUM - MONDAY, 20 SEPTEMBER 2021

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE TOWN & COMMUNITY COUNCIL FORUM HELD
REMOTELY - VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON MONDAY, 20 SEPTEMBER 2021 AT 16:00**

Present

Councillor SE Baldwin – Chairperson

Attendees

N Alderton	S Allin	H David	T Giffard
G Chappell	P Davies	M Hughes	C Jones
K Grabham	RM Granville	J Pratt	C Reeves
T Lyddon	I McLaggan	RE Young	D Evans
D Unwin	KJ Watts	H Bennett	

Apologies for Absence

SG Smith and CA Webster

Officers:

Nicola Bunston	Consultation Engagement and Equalities Manager
Mark Galvin	Interim Democratic Services Manager
Joanne Norman	Interim Group Manager - Financial Planning & Budget Management
Jonathan Parsons	Group Manager Planning and Development Services
Andrew Rees	Democratic Services Officer - Committees
Mark Shephard	Chief Executive

211. ELECTION OF CHAIRPERSON FOR THE MEETING

RESOLVED: That Councillor S Baldwin be elected Chairperson for the meeting in the absence of the Chairperson, Councillor HJ David.

212. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

213. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Town and Community Council Forum of 10 May 2021 be approved as a true and accurate record.

214. SHAPING BRIDGEND'S FUTURE - BUDGET CONSULTATION 2021 ENGAGEMENT WITH TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCILS

The Consultation, Engagement and Equalities Manager reported on the consultation process on the budget consultation, which aimed to ensure effective engagement with Town and Community Councils and local residents. She stated that the Forum will receive a presentation on the Medium Financial Strategy, which will set the scene for future years' savings requirements and budget pressures.

The Forum received a presentation by the Group Manager Financial Planning and Budget Management on the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) in order to set the scene for future years' savings requirements and budget pressures. She informed the Forum that as at quarter 1, an over spend of £904k was forecast. She highlighted the

financial impact of Covid-19 on the Council, which had seen additional cost pressures; lost income such as car parking, school meals and planning fees. MTFS savings of £1.760m in 2021-22 may not be achieved and there may be a potential shortfall in Council Tax collection. However, there were some unanticipated savings as some service provision had reduced or stopped, as well as mileage savings due to the reduction of physical meetings. Financial support had been provided by the Welsh Government, through the Covid Hardship Fund, which has now been extended to 31 March 2022. She highlighted the likely budget scenarios facing the Council in the February 2021 MTFS, with most likely budget scenario being a reduction of £6.959m in 2022-23 and informed the Forum that the higher the Aggregate External Finance and higher Council Tax increase, the lower budget cuts required. She also highlighted the impact of an increase in funding of 2% by the Welsh Government would result in different savings targets for different levels of Council Tax increase.

The Group Manager Financial Planning and Budget Management outlined the pressures facing the Council such as the longer term impact of Covid-19 as the recovery phase is entered and uncertainty of funding levels; the impact of Brexit on costs / prices; staffing costs – increase in National Living Wage, Real Living Wage, and unknown pay awards; inflationary pressures, with CPI currently at 3.2%, rising rapidly and demographic pressures. She stated that potential priorities included Business and the economy; Homelessness; Health and wellbeing; Digitalisation; Decarbonisation and Council Tax levels collected.

The Consultation, Engagement and Equalities Manager informed the Forum that of the number of residents who had engaged in the budget consultation process, with 5,000 engaging in 2018 and 7,500 engaging in 2019. Despite the pandemic, which did not allow face to face engagement to be carried out, there were 1,831 interactions in 2020 through a combination of survey completions, engagement at various meetings, social media and digital communication engagement and via the local authority's Citizens' Panel. She stated that the aim of the consultation (which went live this afternoon) is to consult as wide as possible and it was hoped to replicate face to face consultation and live meetings in 2021. A link to the electronic form and posters would be sent to all Town and Community Councils. The Consultation and Engagement team will liaise with Town and Community Councils directly to arrange attendance at meetings. The Consultation, Engagement and Equalities Manager informed the Forum that the MTFS and Budget Consultation Report will be presented to Cabinet in December.

A member of the Forum referred to Town and Community Councils being asked to take on responsibility for functions and services from the County Borough and asked whether these would be bankable savings or cuts. The Group Manager Financial Planning and Budget Management stated that the Council used a variety of approaches to achieve the MTFS savings, e.g income generation and try to find as many budget reductions as possible through the smarter use of resources rather than by cutting levels of service. The Leader commented that the Council will always strive to provide the best service, although it was likely that the bigger share of savings would be in the form of budget cuts going forward.

RESOLVED: That the Town and Community Council Forum received and considered the report and gave consideration to engagement during the live period.

215. **PLANNING UPDATE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN, NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY & PLACEMAKING**

The Forum received a presentation from the Group Manager - Planning & Development Services on the Local Development Plan, National Planning Policy and Placemaking.

The Group Manager - Planning & Development Services explained that the Local Development Plan (LDP) is a statutory, high level strategy which must be prepared and sets out in land-use terms the priorities and objectives of the Council. The current LDP is due to expire and the preparation of a replacement plan is underway. He stated that the plan is at a critical stage and the Council has published the Replacement LDP Deposit Draft for public, with an 8 week consultation held over Summer.

He informed the Forum that the Deposit Draft builds upon the Preferred Strategy, previously consulted on in 2019. The purpose of the consultation is to seek the views of all of communities on the next stage of the LDP process. Once finalised and adopted, the Replacement LDP will replace the existing LDP (2006-2021) as the statutory Development Plan for the County Borough and will remain in place until 2030. He stated that the Deposit Draft consists of a Written Statement which outlines local planning policies, land use allocations and associated justification based on the supporting evidence. The Proposals Map illustrates the land use allocations, settlement boundaries and planning designations proposed in the LDP in a plan form.

The Group Manager - Planning & Development Services informed the Forum of the 4 strategic objectives, which sought to reflect national policy and legislation and address issues facing the County Borough. He stated that public consultation on the Deposit Draft had given the opportunity to all members of the community and key stakeholders to give their opinion, with 1200 responses having been received. The responses were being reviewed by officers as to whether changes are required to the Deposit Plan. A new Delivery Agreement with would then be prepared with Welsh Government to set out an appropriate timescale towards formal adoption of the replacement LDP.

The Group Manager - Planning & Development Services set out the principles of Future Wales 2040 (The National Plan), which is a national land use Development Plan for Wales, replacing the Wales Spatial Plan. It outlines where investment in infrastructure and development should be for the greater good of Wales and its people and linked to the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. It is a framework built on by Strategic Development Plans (SDPs) at a regional level and Local Development Plans (LDPs) at local authority level, which must be in conformity with Future Wales. He stated that the National Plan together with Planning Policy Wales 11 (PPW11) placed a strong emphasis on regional planning through SDPs and more weight to placemaking. Future Wales 2040 is also seen by the Welsh Government as being the first national scale development plan. National growth areas have been defined, with Bridgend identified as a strategically important location as a significant town within the region and being part of South East Wales National Growth Area.

The Group Manager - Planning & Development Services outlined the concept of Placemaking, which is the way places are planned, designed, developed and managed has the potential to positively shape where and how people will live, work, socialise, move about and engage. It is also about ensuring that each new development contributes positively to creating or enhancing environments within which people, communities, businesses and nature can thrive. He stated that the concept has been developed in response to 'placelessness' within the built environment whereby new development lacks a distinct identity, character, sense of community or collective ownership. It is about doing things better, creating vibrant, sustainable and good quality communities and improving the overall standard of design with people at the heart of the process. The Group Manager - Planning & Development Services stated that the local planning authority is in the best position to control and improve development and make the necessary interventions for the benefit of all and this can be achieved through the Local Development Plan and through sound master planning. The development control system will challenge developers by seeking improvements and added quality. He

stated that placemaking has considerable backing through national policy and is aligned with Council strategies, such as the decarbonisation strategy.

He informed the Forum that the Minister for Housing and Local Government had launched the Placemaking Charter Wales, developed in collaboration with stakeholders within the built and natural environments. He stated that Town and Community Councils may sign up to the charter.

A member of the Forum referred to the 1,200 responses to the draft LDP and asked whether the response rate is on a par with previous consultations on the LDP. The Group Manager - Planning & Development Services informed the Forum that the responses to the draft LDP were far greater than for the previous LDP which was the first LDP.

A member of the Forum highlighted an example of placemaking at the site of the former St John's School site where the number of residential units were reduced and he thanked Hayley Kemp, Principal Planning Officer for her role in ensuring that a quality development took place at the site.

A member of the Forum asked whether land in the ownership of the authority is included in the LDP. The Leader informed the Forum that the authority does submit a number of candidate sites as part of the LDP process. The Group Manager - Planning & Development Services informed the Forum that candidate sites have to be fully justified and the Council will go through the same process as land in private ownership. A member of the Forum asked whether vacant school sites would be placed on the LDP. The Group Manager - Planning & Development Services stated that smaller sites not classed as strategic may not specifically be placed on the LDP, but could be allocated as a regeneration site or be considered as development within the settlement limits. The Leader highlighted the example of the former Maesteg Comprehensive School site which had gone through a robust process prior to its development as an extra care facility. The Group Manager - Planning & Development Services informed the Forum that major developments of over 10 houses submitted as a candidate site would be strictly assessed prior to it being included in the final draft LDP. The Cabinet Member Communities assured the Forum that candidate sites go through a rigorous process and that the responses on the draft LDP had been the biggest to date and he thanked planning officers for their efforts in delivering the draft LDP. The Leader emphasised that the LDP is a statutory process and that it would be considered by a Welsh Government Inspector and it was a function of Council to make determinations on the LDP.

A member of the Forum asked what the timescale is for the Inspector's report. The Group Manager - Planning & Development Services informed the Forum that the next step in the process is to produce a consultation report as to whether the plan needs to be changed and also the evidence base, as well as a revised delivery agreement. He stated that the Inspector's workload would need to be considered and that the LDP would have to be programmed into that workload. He informed the Forum that the pandemic had delayed the LDP preparation and there could be a further delay of 6 months to the process running into mid-2022.

A member of the Forum asked whether the impact of the pandemic had impacted the LDP and changed working practices. The Group Manager - Planning & Development Services stated that some policies had been impacted by the pandemic and which would be reflected in the LDP. He stated that the LDP is continually under review to ensure it is delivering.

RESOLVED: 1. That the Town and Community Council Forum noted the report.

2. That a progress report on the Local Development Plan be scheduled to a future meeting of the Forum.

216. **URGENT ITEMS**

There were no urgent items.

The meeting closed at 17:17