

**TOWN & COMMUNITY COUNCIL FORUM - MONDAY, 1 AUGUST 2022**

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE TOWN & COMMUNITY COUNCIL FORUM HELD REMOTELY - VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON MONDAY, 1 AUGUST 2022 AT 16:00**

Present

Councillor HJ David – Chairperson

S Aspey	H T Bennett	G Chappell	DK Edwards
P Ford	J Gebbie	RM Granville	J Holmes
Howells	M R John	L Lewis	S Parker
E Richards	I M Spiller	L Teahan-Dyer	Y Walton-Davies
MJ Williams	E D Winstanley	T Wood	

Apologies for Absence

B Doughty, M Jones and R J Smith

Officers:

Rachel Keepins	Democratic Services Manager
Lowri-Mair Owen	Natural Resources & Wellbeing Officer
Michael Pitman	Democratic Services Officer - Committees
Andrew Rees	Democratic Services Officer - Committees
Zak Shell	Head of Neighbourhood Services

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor H Bennett declared a personal interest in agenda item 4 Cwm Taf Nature Network - Enabling Natural Resources and Well-Being Grant as a member of the Public Service Board.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the 2 February 2022 were approved as a true and accurate record.

3. CWM TAF NATURE NETWORK - ENABLING NATURAL RESOURCES AND WELL-BEING GRANT

The Democratic Services Manager informed the Forum that a Forward Work Programme of items will be developed with the Corporate Management Board and Town and Community Councils. A standing item will be placed on the agenda at each Forum meeting in order to add or amend items to have a clear plan going forward and items can be prioritised according to need.

The Head of Operations – Community Services introduced a report which informed the Forum of the Cwm Taf Nature Network Project which is an initiative funded by the Welsh Government as part of the Enabling Natural Resources and Well-Being Grant (ENRaW). The Forum was provided with an update as to project progress and impact during phase 1 of project delivery. He stated that the Cwm Taf Nature Network aimed to form a collaboration to better manage the green infrastructure of the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board Region and this Council would be the lead body delivering the project across the Region.

The Forum received a presentation by the Natural Resources and Wellbeing Officer on the Cwm Taf Nature Network Project, which is 100% European funded via the Welsh Government. She stated that one of the deliverables within the project is to engage the

community to develop a greater sense of ownership over their green space, to feel safe in those green spaces and discourage antisocial behaviour. Another aim of the project is to strengthen, enhance and protect biodiversity by working with a range of experts and organisations of interest.

The Natural Resources and Wellbeing Officer informed the Forum that 20 green spaces had been identified across the three counties that will be managed as a connected network of green space, largely influenced by the ecological connectivity potential of four species that the project is committed to protecting. Sites in Bridgend had been chosen where officers have more influence over where there are several local nature reserves which are actively being managed or where there is a strong volunteer presence. The ethos of the project being for it to be community led, with there being potential in many of the green spaces to build on that. The project will also seek to support some groups to create exemplar sites, especially around sensory engagement.

The Natural Resources and Wellbeing Officer also informed the Forum that some of the sites already have excellent access, however a contribution towards improving access to green spaces which lack good access is being looked at. In phase 1, Direct Access, who are a 100% disability led organisation have been commissioned to assist with improving access to sites. Their findings, along with that of a health and safety audit, to be delivered by mid-September and the Land Management Plan will be referred to as part of the survey work being carried out.

The Natural Resources and Wellbeing Officer explained the timeline for delivery of the project which originally was to be delivered over 3 years, would now be delivered across a 12-month period by June 2023. The characteristics of the project environmental conservation activity, path improvement, planting schemes, access projects and furniture installation. In addition, four public service board health walks had been identified to include improved estate, secure and protective cycle storage. Health walks will be identified to encourage employees to have walking meetings and support wellbeing outcomes. Friends' groups would be established and countryside volunteers will be supported to develop the tools they need and to access any training that will enable them to succeed with ongoing habitat management to create high quality green space. She also outlined the project's softer outcomes, to include summer holiday provision, which had been extended to December. She stated that the levelling up fund could be considered to bolster the work being undertaken.

A member of the Forum questioned how the sites were selected and what consultation had been undertaken with Town and Community Councils. The Head of Operations – Community Services informed the Forum that he would need to confirm the engagement done. He stated that commissioned studies had been used to identify sites suitable for the project and although the funding is for £580k, it would not stretch far amongst all Town and Community Councils. The Leader stated that if there were future phases, he would welcome the involvement of Town and Community Councils. The Natural Resources and Wellbeing Officer informed the Forum that more investment will be in this Borough due to there being significantly more sites.

A member of the Forum stated that Coity Higher Community Council is looking at the Black Path which could be developed with a neighbouring Community Council and some green space once the Parc Derwen development is completed. He asked whether Town and Community Councils should sit tight on funding the green space projects, they have planned in the event that another tranche of funding becomes available. The Leader requested that this point be taken up with officers outside the meeting and see if it could fit with the second phase. The Head of Operations – Community Services stated that the Natural Resources and Wellbeing Officer is keen to receive feedback and ideas on potential schemes. He stated that there had been several previous schemes in the past

in the field of biodiversity and he believed there would be schemes going forward, particularly with the Shared Prosperity Fund, although the outcome of that bid was not yet known. He also stated that officers are keen to pursue opportunities with Town and Community Councils to improve areas if further funding becomes available.

A member of the Forum believed that his Community Council had not been the subject of consultation on the project and welcomed the investment in green spaces. The member believed that best use of the Forum be made in its Forward Work Programme over this term in having input in developing accessible green spaces, particularly with the Replacement Local Development Plan and the development of a green lung in Laleston. The Leader stated that initiatives will be explored within the Shared Prosperity Fund, particularly the Glamorgan Way and it was important to ensure that the funding for this project is spent.

A member of the Forum referred to the track record of Coity Higher Community Council in working with the County Borough to deliver asset transfers and path upgrades at significantly lower cost and asked whether track records of Town and Community Councils and their willingness to work with partners had been considered. The Head of Operations – Community Services stated that this project is to encourage community engagement and empowerment leading to Town and Community Councils becoming involved in schemes. The Natural Resources and Wellbeing Officer stated that central to the project is community engagement to succeed in managing green spaces sustainably through volunteering. She stated that she would be interested to hear from Town and Community Councils as to the level of volunteering and activism in green spaces.

The Leader in closing the meeting congratulated members of the Forum on their recent election and re-election to their roles.

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

4. **URGENT ITEMS**

There were no urgent items.

The meeting closed at 16:40