

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCIL FORUM HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND ON MONDAY, 27 OCTOBER 2014 AT 4.00PM

Present:-

Councillor M E J Nott OBE - Leader in the Chair

<u>Councillors</u>	<u>Councillors</u>	<u>Councillors</u>	<u>Councillors</u>
M W Butcher	E M Hughes	C E Smith	D B F White
P A Davies	H E Morgan	R Thomas	R Williams
E Dodd	G Phillips	H J Townsend	M Winter

Town and Community Councillors:

Brackla	- C Jones
Bridgend Town	- R D L Burns
Coity Higher	- A Davies
Coychurch Higher	- N Oram
Coychurch Lower	- B Nash
Garw Valley	- T Jenkins
Laleston	- B Davies
Llangynwyd Middle	- C Griffiths
Maesteg	- P W Jenkins
Merthyr Mawr	- W Willis
Ogmore Valley	- M Jenkins
Pencoed	- J McCarthy
Porthcawl	- D Newton-Williams
Pyle	- M Kearns

Officers:

D Mepham	- Chief Executive
N Young	- Corporate Director - Resources
M Shephard	- Corporate Director - Communities
K Mulcahy	- Group Manager - Highways
G P Jones	- Head of Democratic Services
A Rees	- Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees

67 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from the following Members for the reasons so stated:

Councillor RJ Hancock OBE	- Holiday
Councillor A Morgan	- Holiday
Councillor Y Nott	- Other commitment
Councillor C Reeves	- Work commitment
Councillor M Reeves	- Work commitment
Councillor D Sage	- In Hospital

68 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

69 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Town and Community Council Forum of 14 July 2014 be approved as a true and accurate record.

70 PRESENTATION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

The Leader informed the Forum that he had agreed to the Chief Executive making a presentation to the Forum on the subject of Local Government reorganisation.

The Chief Executive made a presentation to the Forum on proposals on the future of local government in Wales. He stated that the Williams Commission had been set up to look at public services in Wales, how they could be improved, simplified, be more transparent and give greater value for money. The Welsh Government had introduced proposals via a White Paper to reduce the number of Councils from 22 to 12, with the preference based on the recommendations of the Williams Commission. The Welsh Government had sought to encourage voluntary mergers and the extension of existing council terms to May 2018 and would introduce a Bill in January 2015 to deal with enabling voluntary mergers.

The Chief Executive informed the Forum that the Welsh Government's proposed preferred model, which is based on the Williams Commission proposals would see Bridgend merging with Neath Port Talbot Council. However, the Welsh Government had also invited expressions of interest by the end of November from Councils wishing to merge earlier through voluntary mergers. He stated that Bridgend County Borough Council is in a unique position geographically in South Wales in that it straddles both South East and South West Wales. He informed the Forum that Bridgend had historically looked towards the South East, but had also developed strong links with Neath Port Talbot and Swansea Councils to the West through the Western Bay Partnership, which relates to Social Care Services. In considering a merger, the Council would need to consider service considerations such as the economy and development; education; social care; other partners and the impact on Council Tax.

The Chief Executive informed the Forum of the strong links which the Council had developed with local authorities in South East Wales, to its relationship with the Cardiff City region in terms of travel to work, housing regeneration and transport links. The Chief Executive stated that whilst there is a Swansea City region, the Council had not been part of that.

The Chief Executive informed the Forum that on balance a merger to the East would be more beneficial due to the Central South Consortium. The school systems in Bridgend and the Vale of Glamorgan were the same school systems with sixth form education, as opposed to Neath Port Talbot which had a tertiary model of education. He stated that the Council has a priority to improve schools and on balance a merger to the east was more beneficial.

The Chief Executive informed the Forum that the Council had adopted a model of children's and adult social care being in separate directorates, however this was not a common model as Neath Port Talbot and the Vale of Glamorgan had combined social care directorates. He stated that the Council is part of the Health and Social Care integration with Swansea and Neath Port Talbot Councils and Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board, known as the Western Bay Region and it had through the Western Bay Programme developed Community Health, Bridgend Hospital and locality approaches and on balance in terms of social care a merger to the east would be more beneficial. The Chief Executive informed the Forum that in terms of Policing, Criminal Justice and Community Safety and the Fire Service a merger to the east would be more beneficial. In terms of policing, the Council was part of the same BCU with the Vale of Glamorgan and Bridgend was part of the South Wales Fire Authority, whereas if it merged to the West it would be part of an area

where there was a different Fire Authority however, in terms of health provision, a merger to the West would be more beneficial as the ABMU Health Board served Bridgend, Neath Port Talbot and Swansea Councils.

The Chief Executive illustrated the potential impact on council tax band D figures of a merger to the East and West and that according to very raw data it would suggest that a merger to the East would be more beneficial to council tax payers.

A Member of the Forum commented that the recommendations of the Williams Commission were contrary to the analysis of the Officers for a preferred voluntary merger to the East. The Chief Executive informed the Forum that the proposals by the Williams Commission were based on health board boundaries across Wales; however this Council's boundary was part of the Police and Fire authority's boundaries which Neath Port Talbot and Swansea were not part of. The Leader informed the Forum that the Williams Commission proposals were predicated on Health Authority boundaries but there were no proposals to change existing local authority boundaries.

A Member of the Forum expressed concern at the potential impact of local government reorganisation on funding organisations in the third sector. The Chief Executive informed the Forum that there did not seem an obvious driver for a merger to either East or West in terms of working with the third sector, however there was a need to ensure whichever model was eventually implemented that the Council could work with the third sector.

The Leader informed the Forum that the Welsh Government did not have any proposals to alter the boundaries of existing local authorities and there would be whole mergers. A Member of the Forum considered that the consensus of opinion in Maesteg would be for a preference to merge to the West due to its proximity to Neath and Port Talbot. The Leader informed the Forum that there would be a period of consultation for the merger proposals.

A Member of the Forum expressed concern at the impact on Health and Social Services should a merger take place towards the East. The Chief Executive informed the Forum that there is already in existence a health and social care integration agenda and that the Health Boards could adapt and change as local government changed.

Concern was expressed by a Member of the Forum at the possibility of over complicating collaboration and that there was already in existence substantial collaboration to the West with the Western Bay Health and Social Care programme which had seen economies of scale being achieved. The Chief Executive informed the Forum that the Council had two distinct footprints and there was a need to balance what was best for Bridgend.

71 IMPACT OF THE BUDGET REDUCTIONS OUTLINED IN THE MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY ON THE DELIVERY OF KEY SERVICES

The Corporate Director - Resources reported on the impact of budget reductions in the last three years which was £19.776m, equating to 7.75% of its current budget. Until 2014-15, the level of savings was considered to be largely manageable within services, without wide scale redundancies or reductions in services. However, in recent years the financial situation had changed and the savings target had increased dramatically.

The Corporate Director - Resources reported that the savings target for 2014-15 is £11.274m, which includes a number of changes in service delivery, including the transfer of services to the independent sector, policy changes in respect of eligibility for Adult Social Care Services and the introduction of fees and charges for services which were previously provided free of charge or at a subsidised rate. The Corporate Director - Resources informed the Forum that the Medium Term Financial Strategy was predicated on the assumption that the Council would be required to make savings of £36m over the period 2014-15 to 2017-18. However, the Council had been advised by the Minister for Local

Government and Government Business that it would be advisable for the Council to plan for a cut in funding of -4.5% for each of those years, which equated to a savings target of £50m over the four year period. This equated to 29.4% of the 2014-15 budget excluding schools. The Corporate Director - Resources illustrated the savings target required to be made by the Council over the four year period.

The Corporate Director - Resources reported that the Council was restricted in terms of applying savings targets in a number of areas, namely school budgets; significant legislative and demographic pressures within Adult Social Care, as a result of an ageing population, which restrict the extent to which these services can be reduced and a further 12.2% of the budget funding debt repayment, the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and the transfers of council tax to precepting authorities, all of which were unavoidable.

The Corporate Director - Resources reported that Directors had been requested to identify additional savings to meet the required revised savings targets, which was the subject of discussion with Cabinet on which savings proposals would go forward for public consultation. She stated that there was still a gap for both 2015-16 and 2016-17, with very few options proposed for future years and a number of savings proposals were deemed to be at risk of being achieved. These proposals were inherently difficult to deliver as they affect the level or quality of service the Council will provide. A number of proposals require periods of consultation, especially where policy changes are proposed which would result in a time lag between consultation and implementation and would also involve changes to the way services were being delivered and the rationalisation of service provision. Proposals include a transfer of services to third parties, a reduction in provision to the statutory minimum and decisions about whether or not to provide the service at all, where there was no statutory duty to do so. She stated that Directors were exploring alternative ways of delivering services in order to present the public and service users with different options for meeting their requirements. The Corporate Director - Resources indicated that there would be a much smaller very different looking Council, with a much greater emphasis on statutory responsibilities and a commissioning approach.

The Corporate Director - Resources reported on the challenges facing the Council's Directorates and outlined the services identified in each Directorate as potential areas where Town and Community Councils may be able to support and work with the Council on meeting the budget reductions and at the same time endeavouring to ensure continuity of provision for residents.

The Corporate Director - Resources reported that there would be a need to engage with the public and Town and Community Councils to determine whether there are opportunities to support these services either financially or through consideration of alternative management arrangements. She stated that the Council wanted to fully engage with the public on proposed savings and to identify those areas deemed to be a priority for local communities and that a formal public consultation will take place during October and November with all stakeholder groups. Methods of engagement would include a consultation document, an on-line budget simulator and the use of social media. The results of the consultation would inform the draft budget to be presented to Cabinet in December.

The Corporate Director - Resources informed the Forum that a letter would be sent to all Town and Community Councils on areas where they may want to consider working with the Council to provide services in the future.

A Member of the Forum questioned whether the Council would consider Town and Community Councils match funding services on a revenue basis as well as a capital basis and that a 5% increase in the precept by Town and Community Councils would generate additional revenue which could be used to match fund services. The Corporate Director - Resources said that the level of precept was for each TCC, but that if all agreed that they

wanted to use an element of their precept to match fund council revenue that she would consider such a proposal from Town and Community Councils. However she explained that in respect of available Council resources it was a zero sum game so there was no guarantee that match funding could be made available.

A Member of the Forum questioned that with the possibility of councils merging voluntarily would cuts in services be not so stringent. The Corporate Director - Resources informed the Forum that the Williams Commission had identified savings from the reorganisation, but that it was important to recognise that the savings quoted were much less than the savings requirement anticipated by the Council over the next four financial years.. She also stated that austerity measures would be in place in the public sector for the foreseeable future

A Member of the Forum expressed concern at the lack of progress in the transfer of Brackla Community Centre from Bridgend County Borough Council to Brackla Community Council. The Corporate Director - Communities informed the Forum that the transfer of Brackla Community Centre to Brackla Community Council was being progressed.

In response to a question from the Forum, the Corporate Director - Resources stated that letters would be sent to all Town and Community Councils prior to precepts being set. The Corporate Director - Communities stated that officers would commit to meeting with Town and Community Councils before they had set their precepts and that a point of contact for liaising with Town and Community Councils was required.

RESOLVED: That the Forum noted the report.

72 20 MPH LIMITS AND ZONES

The Group Manager - Highway Services reported on the current status of 20 miles per hour limits and zones in the County Borough and on the potential implementation of further schemes.

He reported that local authorities can introduce speed limits of 30, 40, 50, 60 and 70 miles per hour and more recently 20 miles per hour. He stated that there were a number of organisations which advocate blanket lower speed limits and the wider use of 20 miles per hour limits combined with rigorous police enforcement would satisfy casualty reduction targets. The use of 20 miles per hour limits needed to be balanced with other considerations, namely guidance on the enforcement of 20 miles per hour speed limit/zones, which indicated that general compliance needed to be achieved without excessive reliance on enforcement.

The Group Manager - Highway Services informed the Forum that within the County Borough there are some eleven 20 miles per hour zones and one 20 mile per hour speed limited funded through the Welsh Government and Council grants.

The Group Manager - Highway Services reported that current guidance allowed highway authorities to implement 20 mile per hour speed limits and zones where appropriate, particularly in residential areas, which was encouraged and supported by the Welsh Government. He stated that in order for 20 miles per hour speed limits and zones to be successful they should ideally be self-enforcing and in introducing such schemes highway authorities should take account of the level of police enforcement were required before installing either of these measures and must always formally consult the Police when considering their use. Research had indicated that 20 miles per hour speed limits should only be used where vehicle speeds were 24 miles per hour or below or where traffic calming measures were planned as part of the speed management strategy.

The Group Manager - Highway Services informed the Forum that whilst there was evidence that 20 miles per hour zones introduced in conjunction with speed reducing features were

effective in reducing collisions and speeds, there was an evidence gap on the effectiveness of 20 miles per hour speed limits. He stated that the design and treatment of new housing estates sought to design the road layouts to naturally lower speeds by type of road geometry and the introduction of chicanes to change the perception of the driver and naturally promote lower speeds.

The Group Manager - Highway Services reported that in order to influence driver behaviour on existing streets it meant that physical traffic calming measures such as chicanes, build outs or speed cushions were usually required and the cost of introducing such measures was to ensure that a length of road was engineered to promote and maintain a lower average speed could run into tens and thousands of pounds.

The Group Manager - Highway Services reported that the rate at which the Council was able to address requests for new 20 miles per hour schemes was largely based on available funding and that road safety grants from the Welsh Government were prioritised on the basis of individual road safety records. He stated that it was not always the case that requests for 20 miles per hour zones coincide with casualty locations and as such bids to the Welsh Government for funding of 20 miles per hour zones with a low or nil casualty rate were not successful when prioritised against areas with higher collision rates.

A Member of the Forum expressed concern at the saturation of parked cars during the day time at the Coity Fields Estate and stated that a car had collided with a child and believed that a 20 miles per hour zone would be more beneficial in that area than traffic calming measures. The Group Manager - Highway Services informed the Forum that parked vehicles tended to slow drivers down during the day and that he would ask his traffic officers to investigate the concerns raised and confirmed whether measures were needed in that area.

A Member of the Forum believed that the imposition of 20 miles per hour limits in Broadlands had not deterred speeding traffic and that the Police would not enforce the speed limit in that area.

The Group Manager - Highway Services informed the Forum that speed limits are prescribed and that there were also advisory limits in place, however, the majority of motorists adhered to speed limits. He also informed the Forum that where speed limits were advisory that they would not generally be accompanied with traffic regulation features.

RESOLVED: That the Forum noted the report.

73 ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY COVENANT

The Head of Democratic Services reported that the Armed Forces Community Covenant is a local level agreement with the Armed Forces, which outlines the moral obligation between the nation, the Government and the Armed Forces. He stated that the Leader of the Council had been appointed as the Council's Armed Forces Champion with the Council establishing its Community Covenant on 22 November 2013.

The Armed Forces Community Covenant was signed by 32 supporting organisations and with the signing of the Covenant, provided access to the Community Covenant Grant Scheme. The fund supported local projects which brought together the civilian and armed forces communities, strengthening ties and mutual understanding. Local authorities could bid for grant funding for projects which deliver tangible results and meet the overall aims of the scheme for sums between £100 to £250,000 (although larger bids may also be considered in exceptional circumstances). The Armed Forces Community Covenant Steering Group known as the Bridgehead Group, had been set up to develop an action plan and to consider applications for grant funding, prior to their submission to the Ministry of Defence.

The Head of Democratic Services highlighted the achievements of the County Borough Council in developing the Armed Forces Community Covenant. He stated that the Authority had worked in partnership with Bridgend Town Council and the Bridgend Veterans Association to deliver an enhanced Armed Forces Day event on 28 June 2014. The event had proved to be a great success with the average footfall in the Town Centre on the day of the event being increased by 2,500 people. The majority of Town and Community Councils had signed the Covenant with the remainder making arrangements to sign up in the near future and approximately 200 members of the public had signed the Covenant to show their support for the Armed Forces. Participating organisations had been circulated a questionnaire to identify other outcomes they had achieved from the event, which would be collated into a post event report to be made available in due course.

The Head of Democratic Services reported that the main challenge faced by the County Borough to develop the support and services needed to meet the requirements of the Covenant and of the veterans was to identify the veterans and the specific needs they have. Proud and independent veterans or ex-service personnel often prevented them asking for help and support, whilst the MOD due to the constraints of the Data Protection Act could not identify to the Authority those service personnel who were leaving the armed forces and relocating to the area.

The Head of Democratic Services reported that during the Armed Forces Day Event an information questionnaire was developed which invited veterans and ex-service personnel and their families to identify themselves and their support needs. The request also provided an opportunity for the individual to permit their personal details to be shared with the support organisations and to date a total of 42 completed forms had been returned. The data collected from these forms would be added to the Council's database and email addresses passed over to the support organisations identified on the form for follow up. Other key issues identified included Health and Wellbeing; Education (the consideration of non-standard school holidays for the children of serving personnel); Housing and Homelessness and retraining and employment.

The Head of Democratic Services reported that with the possibility of grant funding available from the Armed Forces Community Covenant Grant Scheme, there were opportunities for local organisations and community groups to identify projects to support veterans and communities within the County Borough. He highlighted successful examples in Hampshire and in Gateshead.

The Head of Democratic Services reported that with the current high profile of the Armed Forces and the commitment of the signatories of the Armed Forces Community Covenant, it was hoped that the momentum of the Covenant which had been generated recently could be built upon to:-

- Continue to identify the veterans and ex-service personnel within the County Borough;
- Improve the understanding of the support and services needed by them;
- Identify suitable projects which can be developed and grant bids.

A Member of the Forum informed that Bridgend Town Council had set up a military advisory group and asked whether the County Borough Council would continue to provide legal support in implementing stopping up orders for temporary road closures. The Head of Democratic Services informed the Forum that the Council would support where it can with stopping up orders, subject to the availability of resources.

A Member of the Forum questioned the mechanism for applying for funding. The Head of Democratic Services informed the Forum that an application was submitted by an

organisation for funding, who would run the project and oversee it, and the Bridgehead Group would receive a report on the outcome of the project.

RESOLVED: That the Forum noted the report.

74 SCHEDULE OF AGENDA ITEMS

The Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees presented a report on behalf of the Monitoring Officer, which informed the Forum of requests for items to be presented at future meetings and in addition, a report would be presented to the next meeting of the Forum on Democratic Diversity which would be presented by the Council's Diversity Champion. It was also intended to change the date of the next meeting of the Forum to due to the proximity of the current date to the New Year holiday

RESOLVED: That the Forum noted the report and the items to be considered at future meetings.

The meeting closed at 5.37pm.