

Minutes of the Policy & Finance Committee of Cwmbran Community Council held on Monday 29 November 2021 at 6.00 pm.

Venue: The meeting was held remotely and at the Council House, Ventnor Road, Cwmbran NP44 3JY in accordance with the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021

The recommendations below will be submitted to the Council Meeting to be held on 15 December 2021.

These minutes are subject to confirmation at the meeting to be held on 17 January 2022

Present: Councillor SWJ Ashley (Chairman), Councillors Rh Bennett, AL Bird, SJ Brooks, LJ Chaney, M Day, F Jones, S Morgan, M Villars, WJ Walker and DH Williams.

Councillors, Bennett, Chaney, Day, Jones and Villars participated in the meeting via remote means)

.Also: David Collins (Clerk)

Absent: Councillors LG Johnston, M Johnston and KK Manneh.

(No Public Participation Session was held at this meeting)

PF21/001 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were accepted from Councillors LG Johnston (sickness) KK Manneh (personal)

Apologies for absence were also accepted from Clare Facey (Administration Officer) (personal)

PF21/002 Declarations of Interest

Members were asked to declare any personal and/or prejudicial interests that they may have and sign the Interests Sheet to give details of the nature of the interest.

PF21/003 Membership

Members noted the membership and terms of reference of the committee, which had been approved at Annual Council on 19 May 2021.

It was **recommended** that the information is noted.

PF21/004 Itemised Schedule of Receipts & Payments (October 2021)

Members considered the above information, including bank reconciliation. The Clerk confirmed that corresponding statements and reconciliation had been verified by Councillor M Villars, in accordance with financial regulations. The Chairman of the Council thanked Councillor Villars for his assistance.

Issues raised by Members included:

E232 Owl camera/speaker for Council meetings for hybrid meetings (H05)

I065 Torfaen County Borough Council – Tenants

I067 HMRC – Quarterly VAT refund

The Clerk agreed to indicate the periods to which payments related on future

references to Torfaen County Borough Council tenancy and HMRC.

It was **recommended** that the information is noted.

PF21/005 Accounting Statements and Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2021

Members noted that the results of the external audit of the above remained awaited from Audit Wales. The Council has enquired about progress. Appropriate notification had been published to explain the position.

The Chairman of the Council expressed his concern at the delay. The Clerk agreed to make enquiries of other councils to compare the position.

It was **recommended** that the position is noted.

PF21/006 Standards & Ethics Committee

Cllr SJ Brooks represented town and community councils on the local Standards & Ethics Committee.

Members noted that his four-year term of office had now come to an end. The Monitoring Officer had proposed to report to Torfaen County Borough Council in December to agree an extension to that term until the elections in May 2022.

Before doing so she was required to consult all the community councils. Details had been circulated to Members. No objections had been received.

Councillor Brooks elaborated on the arrangements for Members' information.

It was **recommended** that the proposal is noted.

PF21/007 Informal Resolution Protocol

On 27 October 2021, the Council considered an amended version of the model informal resolution protocol for adoption. (Minute CL21/098 refers).

The amendment made to the existing protocol adopted by the Council is that repetitive low level and frivolous complaints should now be considered for informal resolution.

The Council resolved that consideration is deferred to receive further information about complaints handling processes.

Members noted that there was no time limit for adopting the protocol. Members considered that it would be appropriate to spend time in developing a process for how it would be implemented. This information would therefore be reported to a future meeting before the end of the current financial year.

Councillor Brooks elaborated on the arrangements for Members' information.

It was **recommended** that the information is noted.

PF21/008 Contract Standing Orders

Members considered revised Contract Standing Orders.

The Clerk agreed to highlight any changes when reporting such matters to Members in future.

It was **recommended** that the Contract Standing Orders are approved.

PF21/009 The Local Elections (Principal Areas) (Wales) Rules 2021 and the Local Elections (Communities) (Wales) Rules 2021

Members considered details of key decisions recently taken by Welsh Ministers in relation to the above. (Minute CL21/060 refers).

It was **recommended** that the information is noted.

PF21/010 Council House Matters

Members noted that Cwmbran Photographic Society had hired accommodation at the Council House on a weekly basis for many years but that as the club had now found alternative accommodation the arrangement had been terminated. The Clerk agreed to produce a schedule of users of the premises for Members' information.

Members also noted that Richard Davies had commenced his role as Cleaner/Caretaker. He would play an important role in ensuring the health & safety of the building and maintaining hygiene standards.

It was **recommended** that the information is noted.

PF21/011 Corporate Joint Committee (General) (Wales) Regulations 2022

Members noted that, as part of the phased approach to putting in place the legislative framework within which Corporate Joint Committees (CJCs) would operate, the Minister for Finance and Local Government was launching a consultation on the next set of general regulations, the Corporate Joint Committee (General) (Wales) Regulations 2022. (Minute CL20/084 refers). Members considered key issues associated with the consultation. Responses were due by 22 December 2021.

Issues raised by Members included:

- concerns that the CJCs could duplicate the work of Public Service Boards.
- concerns that the CJCs would replicate the former County Council arrangements.
- concerns about the addition of a further tier of local government.

It was **recommended** that Members forward any further observations to the Clerk.

PF21/012 Torfaen County Borough Council: Christmas Play Resources

Members noted that Torfaen County Borough Council (Play Services) was in the process of putting together play and wellbeing packs to be given out to families across Torfaen as in 2020.

These consist of play resources such as art and craft materials, playdough, balls, frisbees etc.

Distribution would be undertaken in partnership with Cwmbran Community Council, with no additional costs falling on the Council. Details would be shared across social media.

Several Members offered to assist with the distribution of resources.

It is **recommended** that the arrangements are supported.

PF21/013 Liaison Meeting with Torfaen County Borough Council Chief Executive

Members considered a report on discussions held with the new Chief Executive of Torfaen County Borough Council.

It was **recommended** that the information is noted.

PF21/014 Installation of Traffic Speed Signs (“Speed Indicator Devices”): Llantarnam Road, Station Road and Greenmeadow Drive/Blenheim Road and other potential locations.

On 27 October 2021, Members considered proposals re the above (Minute CL21/099 refers). Members considered information provided in relation to areas of most concern in relation to speeding. (Minute CL21/074 refers.) The Council had supported the installation of Speed Indicator Devices at Llantarnam Road, Station Road and Blenheim Road.

It was **recommended** that the decision of the Council is noted and implemented. (Highways Act 1980 s274a)

PF21/015 Seminars & Outside Bodies

Members considered a report on meetings of One Voice Wales (Gwent Valleys Area Committee and Larger Councils) attended by Councillor SWJ Ashley and the Clerk.

Councillor Ashley elaborated on issues discussed at each event, with particular reference to the future of Public Service Boards, environmental matters, canals, examples of best practice and growing expectation for town and community councils to support the work of Principal Councils. The Chairman of the Council emphasised the importance of town & community councils being recognised for their support.

The Clerk agreed to circulate details of some of the examples of best practice highlighted.

The Clerk drew attention to the Council’s forthcoming work in relation to a pilot self-evaluation toolkit for community and town councils in Wales, which was referred to in the report. Members considered that the toolkit could help the Council evaluate the impact of its work.

It was **recommended** that the information is noted.

PF21/016 Exclusion of the Press & Public

In view of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, it was agreed that the following matters be considered in private and that the power of exclusion of the public under Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act, 1960 be exercised.

PF21/017 Insurance

Members noted that quotations had been submitted to provide the Council with insurance cover when the Council’s existing cover expired in January 2022. The bids included a submission from the Council’s existing insurer, Zurich.

It was **recommended** that the bid from Zurich to provide insurance cover for three years is accepted.

PF21/018 Appointment of Internal Auditor

Members noted that quotations had been submitted to provide the Council with new internal audit arrangements. (Minute CL21/089 Refers).

The Clerk agreed to make further enquiries in relation to issues raised by a Member.

It was **recommended** that

- (1) the quote from Andy Smith, Sole trader trading as Community Finance Solutions is accepted for a three-year period.
- (2) expenditure that would exceed the amount provided in the revenue budget for this class of expenditure is approved.
- (3) the Council undertakes a review during the current financial year of its systems of internal control and the outcome is considered by Members and duly minuted.

PF21/019 Staffing Matters

Members considered a report to extend the existing arrangements relating to the hours worked by two members of staff. (Minute CL21/077 (2) refers.)

It was **recommended** that the arrangements described above are confirmed.

Signed
(Chairman, Policy & Finance Committee)