

Minutes of the Policy & Finance Committee of Cwmbran Community Council held on Monday 17 January 2022 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 9 February 2022.

These minutes are subject to confirmation at the meeting to be held on 28 February 2022

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

Councillors Bennett, Day, Jones and Williams participated in the meeting via remote means.)

.Also: David Collins (Clerk) and Clare Facey (Administration Officer.) Clare Facey participated in the meeting via remote means.

Absent: Councillors LJ Chaney, KK Manneh and LJ Johnston.

(Councillor M Johnston passed away on 8 January 2022.)

(No Public Participation Session was held at this meeting.)

PF21/020 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were accepted from Councillor LJ Chaney (personal).

PF21/021 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.

Councillor SWJ Ashley declared a non-prejudicial interest in Minute PF21/037 below (Gwent Draft Well-being Assessment - Consultation Period) as a member of Torfaen County Borough Council. He remained in the meeting during the discussions. He would reconsider the nature of the interest matters at County Borough Council level taking into account all relevant evidence and representations.

Councillors SWJ Ashley, RhM Bennett, SJ Brooks and the Clerk (David Collins) declared a non-prejudicial interest in Minute PF21/027 below (Estimates 2022/2023) as Members of the Management Committee of Cwmbran Centre for Young People. They remained in the meeting during the discussions. Councillors Ashley, Brooks and the Clerk are also Trustees.

PF21/022 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 November 2021 were confirmed as a correct record, subject to the deletion of the words "Greenmeadow Drive/" from Minute PF21/014 (Installation of Traffic Speed Signs.). The Chairman signed the minutes.

PF21/023 Itemised Schedule of Receipts & Payments (November 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. No issues stood referred to the committee as a result of this process.

Issues raised by Members included:

- verification of bank statements etc. (Financial Regulation 2.2) The Clerk confirmed that Financial Regulation 2.2 had been complied with. He agreed to bring copies of signed statements etc to future meetings.
- frequency of payments.
- unrepresented cheques.

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

PF21/024 Review of Internal Audit and Audit Plan

Members considered a draft Audit Plan and annual review of internal audit. The plan and review had been the subject of consultation with the Council's internal auditor. Members were satisfied with the Council's systems of internal control. Members noted that the Clerk had met the new auditor to agree the date and scope of the Interim Audit, which would take place on 3 February 2022.

It was **recommended** that the Council approves the Annual Review of Internal Audit and Audit Plan

PF21/025 Review of Fees & Charges 2022/23

Members considered provisional fees and charges for the forthcoming year. Members also considered proposed fees and charges for the 2022 Big Event.

It was **recommended** that:

- (1) the fees and charges are approved, subject to an increase of 2% in rental and service charges to Torfaen County Borough Council,
- (2) the fees and charges for the Big Event 2022 are the subject of a further report, should the event take place.

PF21/026 Financial Reserves: Review & Risk Assessment

Members considered a detailed report and risk assessment of the Council's use of Financial Reserves and Investments.

Members discussed the use of Reserves in general. Specific issues raised by Members also included:

- use of Reserves to reduce pressure on the Precept and ease the financial burden on the community in the light of Covid-19.
- Earmarked Reserves: Building Maintenance.
- Earmarked Reserves: Local Government Reform and Responding to New Legislation.
- potential future pressures such as climate change, zero carbon planning, health and well-being.
- use of underspend to meet environmental commitments

It was **recommended** that

- (1) as a medium-term planning objective, a minimum General (un-earmarked) Reserve level is retained, based on 3 months Gross Expenditure.
- (2) general revenue reserves are held within a range of three to twelve months of gross expenditure.
- (3) further monitoring of Reserves is undertaken as part of the preparation of end-of-year accounts to ensure that the amount of Reserves held remains appropriate,
- (4) the transfer to EMR of any balance on the following Budget Headings unspent at year-end approved.

G10 Premises Maintenance/Asset Replacement.
H02 Furniture, Fixtures & Fittings.
I13 Regeneration Projects
O02 Cwmbran Centre for Young People Building Maintenance Fund
- (5) the use of funds from General Reserves to reduce pressure on the 2022/2023 Precept is approved. (see Minute (PF21/027 below).

PF21/027 Estimates 2022/2023

Members considered the Council's Revenue Estimates and Precept for the forthcoming year. The information had been considered by other Council committees.

Members discussed the budget in detail. The Clerk introduced the draft budget under each appropriate heading and answered Members' detailed questions, supported by the Administration Officer. He outlined proposals to draw on General Reserves to reduce the pressure on the Precept and support the community in the light of hardship associated with Covid-19.

Issues raised by Members included:

- Members' Training (B04)
- Staff Training (C03)
- Computers, Website & IT Support (inc. Members) (H05)
- Audit & Accounts preparation (software options) (H08)
- Hospitality (I07)
- Youth Engagement/Youth Council (I11)
- Regeneration Projects (I13)
- "Wings to Fly" (I18)
- Contingency (I19)
- Anti-Poverty/Well-being (inc. Benchmarking against others) (I20/N10)
- Events & Community Projects Committee (L)
- Cwmbran Centre for Young People (Maintenance) (002)

Councillors SWJ Ashley, RhM Bennett, SJ Brooks and the Clerk (David Collins) declared a non-prejudicial interest in this item (Estimates 2022/2023) as Members of the Management Committee of Cwmbran Centre for Young People. They remained in the meeting during the discussions. Councillors Ashley, Brooks and the Clerk are also Trustees.

- Twinning (PO1)

The following amendments to the draft budget were agreed:

- C03 reduce to £1500 (see also EMR)
- I07 delete
- I13 move to Environment, Sustainability & Planning Committee
- I18 delete
- I19 delete

Members also considered the use of s137 Local Government Act 1972 in relation to certain expenditure.

It was **recommended that** that:

- (1) the 2022/23 Estimates, as amended above, are approved.
- (2) £100,000 of General Reserves is set aside to reduce pressure on the budget for 2022/23.
- (3) the Precept for 2022/23 is confirmed as £601,675.00
- (4) in pursuance of the power conferred by Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) and being of the opinion that the expenditure satisfies the requirements of that section, the following expenditure is approved:
 - (a) Promotional Material up to £3,000 (code I12)
 - (b) Grants to Voluntary Organisations up to £20,000 (code K01)
 - (c) Remembrance up to £2,500 (code L10)
 - (d) Community Dinner up to £3,500 (code L11)

PF21/028 Governance and Constitutional Documents

Members noted that the Councils key documents were now available on the council's [website](#) in an improved format. Members were encouraged to familiarise themselves with the documents.

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

PF21/029 Pay Policy

Members considered a draft Pay Policy.

It was **recommended** that the Pay Policy is approved.

PF21/030 Council House Matters

Members noted that internal decoration work had recently been undertaken at the Council House. Improvements to external lighting were also under consideration.

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

PF21/031 Community Alcohol Partnership for Cwmbran

Members considered a detailed report which described proposals for the establishment of a Community Alcohol Partnership for Cwmbran (CAP). It was considered that this multi-agency group could help reduce anti-social behaviour and support educational and diversionary activity.

It was **recommended** that

- (1) Cwmbran Community Council and Gwent Police, jointly take forward discussions with CAP and key potential partners, in education, Trading Standards, and local community groups.
- (2) the Clerk is instructed to approach Henllys Community Council and Croesyceiliog and Llanyrafon Community Council to invite them to participate in the CAP.

PF21/032 Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021: Draft Statutory Guidance for Community and Town Councils

Members noted that views were sought on the draft statutory guidance for community and town councils on a number of provisions in the Local Government and Elections Act (“the 2021 Act”). Members noted the issues which were included. The consultation closed on 17 March 2022

It was **recommended** that

- (1) the Draft Guidance is noted.
- (2) Members forward any observations to the Clerk.

PF21/033 Eligible Community Councils (General Power of Competence) (Qualifications of Clerks) (Wales) Regulations 2021.

Members noted that the Minister for Finance and Local Government had published information about the Eligible Community Councils (General Power of Competence) (Qualifications of Clerks) (Wales) Regulations 2021, The Council had responded to consultation on the proposals on 22 July 2021.

Members noted that the Clerk currently held CiLCA. The Administration Officer had applied for bursary funding to complete the qualification.

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

PF21/034 Governance and Financial Management: A Self-Evaluation Toolkit for Community and Town Councils in Wales

Members noted the Council had assisted with a pilot exercise in relation to the above. (Minute CL21/110 (2) refers.

Participating Councils were invited to self-assess different key themes of activity. Cwmbran Community Council was asked to assess its performance in relation to Resources & Financial Management.

This theme considered the arrangements the council has in place to manage its resources and covers both assets held and the council’s finances. The questions would ultimately provide confidence that the statutory and non-statutory procedures for good financial management are in place or highlight areas where the council needs to make improvements.

The exercise was undertaken by the Clerk and Administration Officer using a Traffic Light system. Councillors SWJ Ashley, DH Williams and S Morgan assisted with the exercise (Minute CL21/092 (2) refers). Councillor M Villars also assisted in view of his role under Financial Regulation 2.2.

Feedback on the process would be forwarded to One Voice Wales via feedback sessions to be held in the next month or so. Invitations to remote focus group sessions will be e-mailed out later this month.

The exercise confirmed that the Council had generally sound processes in place to manage its resources, One or two areas for improvement were highlighted and these will be addressed in due course. Members could obtain a copy of the results from the Clerk if they wish.

Other themes within the Pilot were also being used to informally assess other areas of activity, pending the roll out of the final Toolkit.

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

PF21/035 Employees Code of Conduct

Members considered the adoption of a code relating to the above.

It was **recommended** that the code referred to in the Code of Conduct (Qualifying Local Government Employees) (Wales) Order 2001 Is adopted.

PF21/036 Seminars and Outside Bodies

Members noted a meeting of the Local Councils in Partnership Committee due to take place on 30 November 2021 had not taken place as the meeting was inquorate. Councillor SWJ Ashley and the Clerk had been present but there were insufficient other members available for the meeting to take place. Agenda items would now roll over to the next meeting due to take place on 27 January 2022.

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

PF21/037 Gwent Draft Well-being Assessment - Consultation Period

Councillor SWJ Ashley declared a non-prejudicial interest in this item as a member of Torfaen County Borough Council. He remained in the meeting during the discussions. He would reconsider the nature of the interest matters at County Borough Council level taking into account all relevant evidence and representations.

Members noted that the newly established Gwent PSB had been working on a Wellbeing Assessment for the region. The first draft of the assessment had been completed and was open for consultation. Comments were re invited by 31 January 2022.

Members discussed matters within the Assessment, with particular reference to issues around public transport.

It was **recommended** that Councillor M Villars provide the Clerk with detailed observations in relation to public transport issues within the Assessment.

Signed
(Chairman, Policy & Finance Committee)