

Minutes of the Environment, Sustainability & Planning Committee held on Wednesday 7 September 2022 at 6.00 pm.

The recommendations below will be submitted to the Council Meeting to be held on 28 September 2022

These minutes are subject to confirmation at the meeting of the committee to be held on a Wednesday 12 October 2022

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

Present Councillors SWJ Ashley (Chair), R Bennett, A Bird, L Chaney, M Day, L Lloyd-Tolman, C Morgan, KK Manneh, W Walker

(Councillors L Chaney participated in the meeting via remote means)

Also Clare Facey (Interim Clerk), Veronika Brannovic, Local Places for Nature Co-ordinator at Torfaen County Borough Council & Ben Black, Cwmbran Life

Absent Councillors F Jones, G Lloyd-Tolman, P Seabourne & M Villars

(No Public Participation Session was held at this meeting)

ESP22/020 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were accepted from Councillors F Jones (personal), G Lloyd-Tolman (work commitments), P Seabourne (personal) & M Villars (holiday).

ESP22/021 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 ESP22/023 Planning, Highways & Footpaths Matters.

He remained in the meeting during the discussions.

ESP22/022 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 July 2022 were confirmed as a correct record. The Chair signed the minutes.

ESP22/023 Planning, Highways & Footpaths Matters

(a) Torfaen County Borough Council's Planning Officer, Helen Smith had been invited to the meeting to explain planning procedures. She was unable to attend but would be available to attend the next Environmental Meeting.

Councillor Walker updated members on the progress of the Active Travel

Route in Llantarnam Ward.

(b) Planning Lists

No objection is offered to Planning List 1425, items 6365 & 6367.

Some of the planning items related to various premises at Cwmbran Shopping. Members suggested that a representative from Cwmbran Shopping is invited to attend a future meeting of the Environmental Committee to update members on current and future projects taking place at Cwmbran Shopping.

(c) Schedules of Torfaen County Borough Council Planning Decisions

The Chair of the Committee updated members on item 5 Planning Application 22/P/0247/HH, which had recently been refused.

Members noted the Schedule of Planning Decisions.

It was **recommended** that:-

- i) a Torfaen County Borough Council Planning Officer would be attending the next Committee meeting, to discuss planning procedures
- ii) that no objection is offered to Planning List 1425, items 6365 & 6367
- iii) a representative from Cwmbran Shopping is invited to attend and update members on current and future plans for the centre
- iv) to note the Schedules of Torfaen County Borough Council Planning Decisions.

ESP22/024 Neighbourhood Services

- a) The Executive Member for Environment at Torfaen County Borough Council had forwarded her apologies.

Councillor Walker expressed his grievances again regarding the collection issues that had been continuously occurring in the Llantarnam Ward, especially over the last 6 weeks of the Summer holidays. He relayed his concerns as collections were, not only being delayed, but also missed entirely, causing fire hazards and extreme stress to residents.

After so many failings, Members suggested that a letter is sent to the Head of Neighbourhood Services to address the issues. If the failings persist, further action would be required.

- b) Members welcomed Veronika Brannovic, Local Places for Nature Co-ordinator at Torfaen County Borough Council, to the meeting.

The Officer gave a full and informative presentation to members, relating to the No Mow Scheme. The presentation covered:-

- the No Mow Scheme is sustainable grassland management in Torfaen
- no Mow Summer is where certain areas are not cut between April and September, then cut and collect
- visibility strips and alongside paths and edges are cut frequently

- this helps increase wildflowers and reduces rank grasses and plants such as docks and thistles
- there are many benefits, such as, it reduces impacts of flooding, it's better for wellbeing, (WFGA), it reduces impacts of droughts, it stores more carbon than trees, it increases biodiversity
- all public bodies have a legal duty to increase biodiversity (s6 duty)
- signage is at various sites that are undertaking the No Mow Scheme, explaining the No Mow Scheme and its benefits
- review workshop in September 2022, to develop cluster sites around existing areas
- botanical and invertebrate surveys – verges & meadows 2023.

Members thanked the Officer for her presentation and the following points were raised:-

- Members expressed concern over certain areas looking “scruffier” than others
- a lot of unkept areas in Northville, around the St David’s road area and Cwmbran Drive
- important for community to be aware and getting schools involved
- Members suggested that they could match-fund (with TCBC) and identify, with help from VB, an area that could be used for a wildflower meadow and purchase plug-plants or seeds to, not only enhance the area, but to help biodiversity. The Council also has a legal duty under s6 as a public body.

It was **recommended** that:-

- a) a letter is sent to the Head of Neighbourhood Services to address the repeated collection issues in the Llantarnam Ward
- b) the Council match-fund £2,000 with TCBC (under N05 Environmental Projects) an area for a wildflower meadow, to identify the area(s) and buy plug plants or seeds, with guidance from Veronika Brannovic
- c) the Torfaen Officer is thanked for her report and willingness to answer members questions
- d) the position is noted.

ESP22/025 Torfaen Replacement Local Development Plan (2018-2023)

Members received a report regarding an update on the Torfaen Replacement Local Development Plan (2018-23).

The Chair of the Committee reported that further studies and evidence relating to the updated Census, would not be available until after Christmas. He suggested that Rob Murray, the Principal Planner at Torfaen County Borough Council, is invited to attend a future meeting to discuss at that time.

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

ESP22/026 Seminars & Outside Bodies: Monmouthshire, Brecon & Abergavenny Canal Trust

No meetings had taken place.

ESP22/027 Future, New Environmental Projects/Well-Being & Anti-Poverty

The Winter Warmer Scheme – Members will be aware that at the last Council meeting, Members approved to support the purchase of thermal blankets together with information packs (CL22/038) in the sum of £10,000 under budget heading N10.

Members noted that enquiries had been made with various companies and leaflets created. Advice had also been sought from One Voice Wales regarding the project (and other Winter Warmer Projects mentioned) to see if there were any other powers that could be used other than s137 (because of the restricted spending limit). One Voice Wales confirmed that the Council could not use section 137 to fund individuals. OVW confirmed that there are no other powers that the Council could use for these types of projects.

Members discussed the project in greater detail and it was suggested that the Council work in partnership with various organisations (such as, CCYP, Food Share Hub, CAB, Financial Inclusion Team, Age Connect) to meet the required criteria. Members agreed to purchase the Huggy Fleece Blanket (to the sum of £10,000) from Promo Corp, who had agreed to provide a branded bag to include free thermal socks and information packs, at no extra charge.

It was **recommended** that:-

- a) the Council work in partnership with CCYP, Food Share Hub, CAB, Financial Inclusion Team and Age Connect in providing blankets for distribution
- b) the Council use Promo Corp to secure Huggy Fleece Blankets to the sum of £10,000 under N10, who had agreed to provide a branded bag to include free thermal socks and the information packs, at no extra charge.
- c) the position is noted.

ESP22/028 Exclusion of the Press & Public

In view of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, it was agreed that the following matter 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.

ESP22/029 Task Force Performance Information

Members considered performance information regarding the recent work of the Task Force.

Members were pleased to note that the Task Force had recently repaired all the Cwmbran Community Council Noticeboards. Members requested that this item is added to the next Environmental agenda, suggesting that more Noticeboards were needed, as not all Wards had one.

Members mentioned the possibility of relevant training that the Task Force might be able to undertake to help the community “draftproof” their homes, such as, chimney balloons, draft excluders to letterboxes, etc.

It was **recommended** that:-

- a) the Task Force performance information is noted
- b) the purchase of new Noticeboards is added to the next agenda for members' consideration
- c) relevant Task Force training is identified to help the community to draft-proof their homes
- d) the position is noted.

Signed
(Chairman, Environment, Sustainability & Planning Committee)