

Minutes of the Policy & Finance Committee of Cwmbran Community Council held on Monday 16 October 2023 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 8 November 2023.

These minutes are subject to confirmation at the meeting to be held on: 27 November 2023

Present Councillors R Bennett (Chair), A Bird, LJ Chaney, M Day, F Jones, P Jones, KK Manneh, C Morgan, S Morgan, P Seabourne & M Villars

(Councillors SWJ Ashley & L Lloyd-Tolman participated in the meeting via remote means)

Also Gareth Davies (Clerk), Andy Smith (RFO/Deputy Clerk), Reverend John Collier (Chair MBACT), Jane Collier (Operational Director MBACT), Richard Dommet (Consultant MBACT), Laura Thomas (14 Locks Centre Manager)

Absent Councillors L Johnson & W Walker

(No Public Participation Session was held at this meeting)

PF23/027 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were accepted from Councillors W Walker (Personal)

PF23/028 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 PF23/030 – MBACT Presentation. He remained in the meeting during the discussions.

PF23/029 Minutes 11 September 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 September 2023 were confirmed as a correct record of the meeting and are approved and actioned therein.

Councillor Bennett signed the minutes.

PF23/030 MBACT Presentation

Councillor SWJ Ashley declared a non-prejudicial interest in Minute PF23/030 – MBACT Presentation. He remained in the meeting during the discussions.

Members received a presentation from representatives of MBACT. The trust is looking to form a project with the Council and for funding to support the regeneration of the Canal over the next few years including the training of volunteers, purchasing equipment, heritage planting, benches and the ongoing maintenance of the Canal.

Members were provided with an overview of the history of the canal which was originally two canals which were linked in 1812 to become the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal, and information on improvement works previously carried out.

The Trust is looking to establish a way to improve the area bringing education and specialised training working closely with Torfaen CBC, Active Travel and colleges to provide access to the canal for the community and expanding tourism. A Partnership with Torfaen CBC is very close to being signed off.

The funding requesting for the project over the next few years includes:-

- 1) Year 1 - £10,000 for supervising and training volunteers, purchasing equipment including a floating platform and heritage planting.
- 2) Years 2 and 3 - £9,000 per year to continue the project and heritage planting and the purchase of 6 benches (3 per year).
- 3) Ongoing financial support of approximately £3000 per year for heritage planting and ongoing maintenance.

Members thanked the representatives for their presentation and asked questions about the proposed project. Concerns were discussed about the water levels in the canal and how this can be resolved and the ongoing issue with weeds.

Members were very interested in how the funding would be used to improve the area and provide education and training and if the trust were looking to the Council to provide the whole cost of the funding for the project. The representatives confirmed that are looking to secure the core funding, although other funding would also be sourced where possible which could then be used for additional improvements and equipment.

Members agreed that this would be a stand alone project rather than a grant application and the request for funding would need to be discussed at the full Council meeting.

It was **recommended** that:-

- a) the project is to be discussed at the Full Council Meeting.
- b) the position is noted.

PF23/031 Itemised Schedule of Receipts & Payments (August 2023) and Bank Reconciliation for August 2023

Members considered the above information, including bank reconciliations. The Clerk confirmed that corresponding statements and reconciliations had been verified by Councillor M Villars, in accordance with financial regulations.

It was **recommended** that:-

- a) that the Itemised Schedule of Receipts & Payments and Bank Reconciliation for August 2023 are noted.
- b) that Councillor Villars is thanked for verifying the accounts.

PF23/032 Finance System

The RFO updated members on the progress of the new finance system. The system is now operational, and staff had received two training sessions, with a third session scheduled for this week. April 2023 data would be entered by the end of this week and reports could then be produced for Councillor Villars to look at and any changes made if necessary to suit the needs of the Council.

The administration and asset parts of the system are also operational, with staff awaiting training.

It was **recommended** that:

- a) the position is noted.

PF23/033 Council House Matters

The clerk updated members on the visits to the building to assess the building by organisations and Councillor Chaney also visited the Council House to advise on mobility access issues which need to be included in any alterations.

The clerk reported on a meeting held with the staff to discuss issues and ideas to improve the building. This included a glass front door with the Council logo to improve visibility for visitors to see that the building is open and options for using the offices in a slightly different way and perhaps expanding it using the model already agreed. A visit from a surveyor has been arranged and also quotes to be arranged to resolve the damp issues.

Major issues included the windows with a number of the glass panels needing to be replaced, quotes have been received for the windows with the best quote of £2500 to replace 37 glass panels in the original upvc windows.

Staff also suggested that part of the kitchen next to the Chamber is made into a staff area as staff currently have lunch at their desks. Members also discussed the exit door in the Chamber with the option to change the door to a push bar with the door opening outwards for easier access.

Members discussed the planters outside the front of the building and agreed that they need to be replanted, members suggested autumn pansies and spring bulbs. The clerk will arrange for the planting outside the front of the building.

Members agreed to the Clerks recommendations, the Clerk will obtain quotes for the next meeting.

It was **recommended** that:

- a) the Clerk arranges quotes for the work to the building.
- b) the position is noted.

PF23/034 Seminars & Outside Bodies

Councillor L Lloyd-Tolman updated members on a discussion with Councillor Wharton to look at arranging a celebration in Cwmbran for the Windrush 75th anniversary.

Councillor Wharton is looking for funding for an event to be held at the end of November at the Parkway Hotel. Costs included £2500 for the venue, £250 for a steel drummer, £250 for awards and £600 contingency, total £3600.

Members approved the plans for the event and suggested linking it to Black History Month and funding the event from the Events & Community projects reserves.

It was **recommended** that:-

- a) arrangements are made for the event.
- b) the position is noted.

PF23/035 Cwmbran Strategic Partnership Group

Members discussed nominating 4 Councillors to the strategic group. A number of members were nominated and members agreed for the representatives to be Councillors A Bird, L Lloyd-Tolman, K Manneh and P Seabourne, Councillor M Day will be reserve.

It was **recommended** that:-

- a) the position is noted.

PF23/036 Exclusion of the Public & Press

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.

PF23/037 Budget 2023/24

The RFO updated members on the attached budget reports.

It was **recommended** that:-

- a) the position is noted.

PF23/038 Proposed Budget Virements

The RFO reported to members the proposed budget virements and members discussed the report and made recommendations.

The RFO to include members amendments and present the amended report to full council.

It was **recommended** that:-

- a) the RFO to include the members amendments and report to full council.
- b) the position is noted.

Signed(Chair, Policy & Finance Committee)