

Policy & Finance Committee

Subject to Confirmation by Cwmbran Community Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the Policy & Finance Committee held on Monday 24 October 2016

Present Councillor TA Matthews (in the Chair). Councillors: SWJ Ashley, SJ Brooks, M Day, S Evans, WM Howell, M Johnston, R Jones, R Kemp, WJ Walker, DJ Williams and TJ Winter.

Also Councillor PJ Williams

Also David Collins (Clerk to the Council) and Clare Facey (Administrative Officer)

CL16/039 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were accepted from Councillors KK Manneh (Work Commitments).

PF16/040 Declarations of Interest

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

PF16/041 Itemised Schedule of Receipts & Payments and Bank Reconciliation (July & August 2016).

Members considered the above information.

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

PF16/042 Monmouthshire Building Society: Interest Rate Reduction

Members considered a letter from the Building Society which gave notification of savings interest rate reduction effective 1 October 2016.

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

PF16/043 Wales Local Government Reform

Members considered information provided by the Society of Local Council Clerks which described the views of the Cabinet Secretary for Finance & Local Government (Welsh Government) about the future of local government in Wales. The statement made particular reference to the implications for town & community councils.

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

PF16/044 Review of Parliamentary Constituencies in Wales

Members noted that the Boundary Commission for Wales had published initial proposals for changes to Parliamentary constituencies in Wales. The Commission's Initial Proposals Report was published on 13 September 2016 and was available on the Commissions' website. Details had been sent to all Members of the Council. Members noted that the period for making representation ended on 5 December 2016.

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It was **recommended** that:

- (1) a special meeting of Full Council is held to consider the proposals.
- (2) the Clerk is instructed to obtain details of any implications of the proposals for the community of Cwmbran for consideration at the special meeting.

PF16/045 Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales Draft Annual Report 2017/18

Members considered the draft report of the Panel, which was responsible for the remuneration of community and town councils.

Members noted that proposed Determinations 44 to 51 were permissive powers, which would require a formal decision by the Council annually. Members discussed the individual Determinations and noted that a Council could adopt any or all of the determinations but that if it did make such a decision, it must apply to all its members. An individual member may make a personal decision to elect to forgo part or all of the entitlement to any of these allowances by giving notice in writing to the Clerk. Members noted that, at this stage, the proposals were in draft only and that the Council would receive notification of the final Determinations. Observations on the draft report were requested by 28 November 2016.

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

PF16/046 Business Risk Register 2016/17: Review of Progress

The Council had approved a Business Risk Register for the current year on 11 May 2016. In approving the Register, Members asked that a further report is submitted during the year. (Minute PF15/084 refers). This information was therefore reported to Members, based on the key headings within the current Register. Members welcomed the information provided and also considered the implications of the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, which could be added to the 2017 Register.

Members discussed recent incidents at Cwmbran Centre for Young People and the position of Members representing other organisations on behalf of the Council in terms of the Council's insurance. The Clerk agreed to seek further advice on Members' position in relation to such matters from the Council's insurers. The Leader of the Majority Group advised Members on their position if they were appointed as Trustees.

It was **recommended** that progress against the Risk Register is noted.

PF16/047 Council House Update: Maintenance Matters

The Clerk updated Members on various matters of routine maintenance at the Council's premises. Members noted that planned testing of portable appliances (PAT) would be carried out on 31 October 2016. Other Health & Safety milestones were monitored regularly by the Clerk and staff. A programme of routine plumbing repairs had also recently been undertaken.

Members expressed their disappointment that the Wi Fi connection in the Council Chamber appeared to be inconsistent. The Administrative Officer explained that, although it was possible to access the internet within the chamber and display information on-line to the projector, the wireless connection within the Chamber from the Council's laptop to the screen was

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temperamental. As a back-up therefore, the projector was connected to the laptop via cables. Members discussed the potential for using other contractors or providers to secure an improvement in these matters.

It was **recommended** that

- (1) progress in relation to maintenance matters is noted.
- (2) further reports on maintenance issues are presented to future meetings.
- (3) the Clerk make urgent enquiries with the Shared Resource Service (SRS) with a view to making an immediate improvement in relation to the Council's Wi Fi/wireless connection, as described above.

PF16/048 Replacement of Council House Annex

The Leader of the Majority Group updated Members on the current position in relation to this project. He confirmed the extent to which the Council had identified Earmarked Reserves for the scheme and referred to discussions with Torfaen County Borough Council about potential project management support. He described some of the procurement models which were available to the Council and confirmed that he would continue discussions with senior management at Torfaen County Borough Council with a view to making early progress on the project.

The Clerk drew attention to the need for compliance with the Council's own rules relating to procurement. He had therefore provided the Head of Procurement at Torfaen County Borough Council with information about the Council's Financial Regulations and Contract Standing Orders to assist with these discussions.

Members discussed anticipated timescales for the work, design options and potential costs. Members emphasised the need to commence work on this project as soon as possible. Members supported actions which would help bring about an early completion of this project.

Members asked to receive regular updates on progress in relation to this project. The Clerk drew attention to the fact that the committee's proceedings were subject to confirmation by Full Council on 16 November 2016, and that any progress could therefore also be reported to Full Council.

It was **recommended** that Members are kept fully informed of progress in relation to this project, with regular reports at every opportunity.

PF16/049 Council Meetings: May 2017

Members noted that the ordinary meeting of Full Council for May 2017 was set for 10 May. As this was after the date of the election on 4 May 2017 it needed to be brought forward in order that existing Members could consider all committee minutes before the election.

It was **recommended** that the date of the meeting is brought forward to Monday 24 April 2017 at 6.00 pm.

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PF16/050 Seminars & Meetings of Outside Bodies

Members considered reports in relation to the following seminars and meetings of outside bodies, attended by representatives of the Council:

- (i) Police & Crime Commissioner's Engagement
with Town & Community Councillors 7 September 2016
- (ii) Seminar: Well Being Assessment 19 September 2016
- (iii) Torfaen Museum Trust 20 September 2016
(Councillor Winter reported that the AGM was due to take place on 12
November 2016)
- (iv) One Voice Wales Conference & AGM 1 October 2016
- (v) One Voice Wales (Gwent Valleys) 4 October 2016
- (vi) PSB Welfare Reform Group 10 October 2016

Members were pleased to note that the Council's Annual Reports, which drew upon principles set out in the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, had been highlighted by One Voice Wales as an example of Best Practice. Members expressed their appreciation of the contribution made by the Clerk in developing the Council's Annual Report process. The Clerk paid tribute to the support he received from the rest of the Council's staff in taking forward such initiatives.

PF16/051 Gwent Archives Exhibition Material

In discussing the financial position of Torfaen Museum Trust recently, Members had highlighted the local history of Cwmbran itself and discussed the possibility of the Council displaying material to illustrate interesting aspects of the history of the town. (For example, Minute PF16/033 refers).

The Clerk reported that, in September 2016, the Council had received a donation of images from Gwent Archives. The images depicted the history of the town around the themes of Buildings, Landscape & People. The collection included maps, documents, photographs and other images displaying the development of Cwmbran since the nineteenth century, through to the planning & development of the New Town. Many of the images were printed & laminated whilst others are available digitally. A selection of the images was made available at the meeting for Members to study.

Members welcomed the donation and discussed options for displaying the material in a way which did justice to the quality of the material. These options included use of social media and a display in the new Council House Annex (Minute PF16/047 above refers.)

It was **recommended** that further consideration is given to appropriate means of effectively displaying the exhibition material referred to.

PF16/052 Exclusion of the Press & Public

It was **recommended** that the following item was not for publication because, in accordance with paragraphs 12 & 14 of schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Access to Information Variation Order Wales 2007), it contained information about a particular individual or individuals and information relating to the financial and business affairs of particular persons, including the council and, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining exemptions outweighed the public interest in disclosing information.

PF16/053 Task Force Review Group

Members considered the proceedings of a meeting of the Review Group established by the Council to review aspects of the work of the Task Force.

The Group had recommended that;

- (1) all Task Force jobs (Gardening & Decorating) are charged at £10.00 per man hour (inc. VAT) and that disabled persons or persons aged over 75 are entitled to 50% discount. This to commence as soon as possible.
- (2) responsibility for receiving regular performance management information about the work of the Task Force (jobs undertaken, jobs awaited etc.) is assigned to the Environment, Sustainability & Planning Committee.
- (3) to commence this role, the Environment, Sustainability & Planning Committee consider a draft "Mission Statement" for the Task Force, based upon the Mission Statement Questions referred to at the meeting of the Group
- (4) in the longer term, the Council consider the potential to merge the Caretaking & Cleaning function (Code G09 and G11) with the Task Force service (Code M).

Members highlighted the need to carefully consider the implications of any proposals to merge the Caretaking & Cleaning function with the Task Force. The Clerk confirmed that a member of the Task Force was currently undertaking the additional role of Caretaker/Cleaner, as approved by the Council (Minute PF16/037(3) refers.) but that the two posts remained separate posts. The success of this arrangement would be closely monitored and reported back to Members.

It was **recommended** that the above recommendations of the Review Group are confirmed.

Signed.....

(Chair, Cwmbran Community Council.)