

Minutes of a Meeting of the Policy & Finance Committee of Cwmbran Community Council held on Monday 23 October 2017

Present Councillor SWJ Ashley (in the Chair) Councillors A Bird, SJ Brooks, PJ Cathcart, M Day, N Hopkins, LG Johnston, R Jones, M Villars and WJ Walker.

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

PF17/032 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were accepted from Councillors Rh Bennett (holiday), M Johnston (personal) and KK Manneh (civic duties).

PF17/033 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.

PF17/034 Itemised Schedule of Receipts & Payments (August 2017 and September 2017)

Members considered the above information.

Issues raised by Members included:

- Unpresented cheque 10596 (Grant Payment).

The Clerk drew attention to the role of Councillor M Johnston in verifying the monthly financial information. He reminded the committee that all Members were welcome to inspect the Council's financial records in detail.

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

PF17/035 Quarterly Financial Monitoring (July, August, September 2017)

It had not been possible to publish this information with the agenda but the Administration Officer distributed it at the meeting. The Clerk confirmed that the information would be formally reported to the next meeting.

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

PF17/036 Annual Review of Internal Audit

Members considered a report which set out the above review and described the Council's audit process. The Review had been undertaken in consultation with the Council's Internal Auditor. The Clerk also referred to recent discussions with the Council's External Auditor about improving the external audit arrangements for future years.

Members noted that the External Auditor would be examining audit arrangements as part of the 2017/18 Audit.

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

PF17/037 Financial Regulations

Members considered the above regulations, as part of a wider, ongoing review of the Council's governance arrangements. The Clerk drew attention to certain changes made to the previous regulations and related changes to Standing Orders.

It was **recommended** that:

- (1) The Financial Regulations are approved.
- (2) Standing Orders are amended to remove reference to the Estimates timetable.
- (3) Members who had not yet undertaken Code of Conduct training be granted a further three months to undertake the training.

PF17/038 Charter

Members considered a draft Charter, which would govern the relationship between the six Town & Community Councils in Torfaen and Torfaen County Borough Council. The Charter followed discussions by members of TCALC. It replaced previous versions which had become outdated.

Members emphasised the importance of maintaining effective communications with Torfaen County Borough Council, highlighting a number of recent cases where communications had been poor. Members also continued to express their disappointment that they were unable to speak at Members Seminars held at Torfaen County Borough Council.

Members considered that the draft Charter represented a positive way forward and were especially pleased that the question of a Liaison Officer had now been resolved. However, it was important that the effectiveness of the Charter remained a matter for regular review. The Clerk drew attention to provisions within the Charter relating to Monitoring & Review (Section 15.)

Members queried the wording of part of section 8.1 of the Charter, which was unclear.

The Chairman encouraged Members to participate in the regular meetings which took place in relation to Neighbourhood Services matters.

It was **recommended** that:

- (1) the Charter is supported, subject to there being regular reviews and monitoring of its effectiveness.
- (2) section 8.1 is amended to remove the unclear references.

PF17/039 Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales draft Annual Report 2018/19

Members considered the Independent Remuneration Panel draft Annual Report 2018/19, which had been published for consultation. In particular, Members considered section 13, which related to Town & Community Councils.

Issues raised by Members included Determination 45, 48 and 51. It was **recommended** that the Council submit the following observations in respect of the draft report:

- i. The proposal in Determination 45 to make annual payments in recognition of specific responsibilities is supported, but the proposed fee of £500 each is considered too high.
- ii. The proposal in Determination 51 to provide a Civic Head payment is supported but the proposed maximum of £1500 is considered insufficient in recognition of the role of a Chairman of a large, ambitious Council.

PF17/040 Council House Matters

Members noted that the rebuilding of the Annex was proceeding within budget and that works were progressing in accordance with anticipated timescales. Members viewed a photographic display of the progress of the works, which included a site visit undertaken by the Chairman of the Council.

The Clerk drew attention to items of maintenance and decoration required in the Council House, which recent inspections had identified. Completion of the annex would allow the Council to address such matters, possibly through the identification of Earmarked Reserves.

The recent Fire Safety Risk Assessment had resulted in a generally positive outcome but certain physical works would also be necessary to implement the Action Plan which had followed the Risk Assessment. A detailed report would be submitted to a future meeting.

The Clerk reported on a series of measures which had already been put in place as a result of the Risk Assessment. Councillor Cathcart confirmed that he had attended the inspections carried out as part of the Risk Assessment in his role as Health & Safety Member Champion.

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

PF17/041 One Voice Wales AGM 2017

Members had previously asked to receive details of Motions submitted to the above. (Minute PF17/011 refers) Details were therefore submitted to the committee.

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

PF17/042 Review of the Community and Town Council Sector

Members noted that an independent review panel had been established to consider the future role of Community and Town Councils. The panel would be undertaking this work over the coming year with a view to making recommendations to the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government next autumn.

As a starting point, however, the panel had asked the following four high level questions:

- (a) What should Community and Town Councils be responsible for?
- (b) How should they operate?
- (c) What's standing in their way to deliver for the local community?
- (d) How do councils ensure they best represent their local community?

The Clerk reported that he had already contacted the panel to express the Council's interest in hosting a visit as part of this review. He also referred to discussions being arranged by One Voice Wales to respond to the consultation. He proposed that the Council take part in these discussions.

It was **recommended** that:

- (1) the Council engages with One Voice Wales to respond to this consultation exercise.
- (2) Members who wished to submit any views as part of the exercise be asked to provide the Clerk with details.

PF17/043 Guidance for Principal Councils on the Review of Communities

Members noted that the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales (the Commission) had been asked by the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government to provide updated guidance on the conduct of community reviews by principal councils to support greater consistency in the manner in which community reviews are conducted. Before publishing the guidance in its final form the Commission had provided a draft of the document for consultation, which Members considered. The consultation commenced on 29 September 2017 and would end on 21 December 2017. The Commission welcomed views on the draft guidance.

It was **recommended** that Members who wished to submit any views as part of the exercise be asked to provide the Clerk with details.

PF17/044 Boundary Commission for Wales: Revised Proposals Report 2018 Review

Members noted that the Commission had published Revised Proposals for changes to Parliamentary constituencies in Wales. The Revised Proposals Report was available on the Commissions' website: www.bcw2018.org.uk or at 54 public locations across Wales. The representation period would end on 11 December 2017.

It was **recommended** that Members who wished to submit any views as part of the exercise be asked to provide the Clerk with details.

PF17/045 Seminars & Outside Bodies

Members considered reports in relation to the following seminars and meetings of outside bodies, attended by representatives of the Council. A number of key items discussed at these events had already been discussed by Members earlier in the meeting.

- (i) Congress Theatre Company 11 September 2017
- (ii) South Wales Larger Councils Network 3 October 2017
- (iii) TCALC 10 October 2017
- (iv) One Voice Wales Gwent Valleys Area Committee 10 October 2017 (AGM & Area Meeting)
- (v) Members' visit to Police Control Centre 17 October 2017 (oral report). The Clerk invited Members who had been unable to attend to contact him to arrange another opportunity. Information about the 101 call line would be included in the forthcoming Residents Handbook.
- (vi) One Voice Wales Larger Councils Committee 18 October 2017

It was **recommended** that the reports are noted.

Signed (Chairman, Cwmbran Community Council)