

Minutes of a Meeting of the Environment, Sustainability & Planning Committee of Cwmbran Community Council held on Wednesday 10 April 2019 in the Council Chamber, Cwmbran Community Council, Ventnor Road, Cwmbran NP44 3JY

Present Councillors KK Manneh (in the Chair) SWJ Ashley, AL Bird, RhM Bennett, SJ Brooks, PJ Cathcart, M Day, LG Johnston, M Johnston, LM Ryan, M Villars & WJ Walker.

Also David Collins (Clerk to the Council)

(No Public Participation Session was held at this meeting)

ESP18/062 Apologies for Absence

No Apologies for Absence were submitted from Councillors **

ESP18/063 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.

ESP18/064 Planning, Highways, Footpaths and Licensing Matters

(a) Planning Lists

Members considered outstanding Planning Lists 1270 and 1271.

It was **recommended** that

- (1) no objection is offered in respect of Planning List 1270.
- (2) an objection is submitted in respect of item 6509 on Planning List 1271 due to insufficient parking.
- (3) no objection is offered in respect of items 6510 and 6511 on Planning List 1271

(b) Planning Decisions of Torfaen County Borough Council.

Members considered recent Planning Decisions.

It was **recommended** that the planning decisions are noted.

ESP18/065 Parks & Open Spaces

The Chairman welcomed Andrew Osborne, Group Leader, Environment Strategy and Streetscene Operations (Torfaen County Borough Council)

Andrew Osborne set the management of open spaces within the wider context of the objectives of the Torfaen Public Services Board (PSB), which sought to develop a functional, connected network of natural areas that supported the current and future well-being needs of local populations. He referred to funding available from Natural Resources Wales and PSB partners to develop this work and address issues around land management, recreation, pollination, ecological connectivity, health & well-being and air quality. He also referred to other work being undertaken in relation to an Open Space Assessment & Mapping Exercise which would inform recreational need within the wider strategy. Recently there had been a reconfiguration of the Environment and Streetscene Group within Torfaen

County Borough Council to deliver Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 priorities, with a particular focus on integration of the two services so that operations clearly delivered against the legislation and the Council's Clean and Green corporate priority.

Issues raised by Members included:

- consultation with the public (the above changes had been informed by the recent Well-being Assessment)
- the need to protect areas of open space from development and encourage use of brownfield sites. (Andrew Osborne described the role of the Local Development Plan in protecting areas of open space and balancing competing priorities.)
- maintenance and preservation of footpaths.
- ways in which open space land owned by bodies other than Torfaen County Borough Council (such as Bron Afon) could be protected.
- the pressure put on land for development by “candidate sites.”
- the role of the public in ensuring that areas of open space were identified and protected.
- the potential for town & community councils to develop Place Plans to protect areas of open space.
- the potential to seek the views of the public in relation to matters associated with open space provision and protection of open spaces.
- Timescales for completion of the work and links to the current to Open Space Assessment & Mapping Exercise.

Andrew Osborne confirmed that funding was in place to engage consultants who would prepare the Green Infrastructure Plan, working closely with Town & Community Councils and stakeholder groups in the current calendar year. It was important that public knowledge was used to inform this plan. He considered that the use of external consultants would help to deliver an evidence based plan which could withstand challenge and inform other planning policies and decisions. Members referred to work previously undertaken and expressed disappointment at the anticipated timescales referred to.

Members asked to be kept informed of progress. The Council had already agreed to hold regular forums are held every three months in relation to open space and related projects. (Minute ESP18/013 refers)

It was **recommended** that

- (1) Members are provided with plans showing the extent of open space in each ward in order that they could visit some of the sites and identify any omissions.
- (2) a further report is submitted on the progress of the work of the external consultants, with particular reference to the way in which their work was informed by the public.

- (3) a further visit to Ty Coch picnic site is arranged to view the progress of landscaping works undertaken in 2013
- (4) the Council's earlier decision to request regular forums is noted
- (5) the available budget in relation to environmental projects is noted.

ESP18/066 Active Travel

The Chairman welcomed Mark Panniers, team Leader Access, Economy, Environment and Culture (Torfaen County Borough Council), who updated Members on progress in relation to Active Travel.

In September 2014, the Welsh Government had introduced the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013 which placed a legal requirement on local authorities in Wales to map, plan, improve and promote routes deemed suitable for active travel. To meet the requirements of the Act, Torfaen County Borough Council was required to publish an Existing Routes Map (ERM) that showed routes which met the standards set out in Welsh Government Design Guidance.

Members noted that Active travel meant walking and cycling for everyday short-distance journeys, such as journeys to school, work, or for access to shops or services. Active travel did not include journeys purely made for recreation or social reasons. The ERM would be used by people to plan their walking and cycling journeys. The maps would not show all walking and cycling routes available in Torfaen.

Following a public consultation carried out in 2015 a draft ERM was submitted to Welsh Government in January 2016 and subsequently approved in July 2016.

Torfaen's Integrated Network Map sets out a 15 year programme of improvements to routes shown on the map. The map was submitted to Welsh Government in November 2017 and approved in February 2018.

The Welsh Government provided funding to carry out feasibility and design work to plan improvements to the routes around Torfaen to encourage Active Travel. It was also important that new development sites are linked to existing Active Travel networks.

Welsh Government had also provided funding (£60 million) between 2019-2022 for Council's to implement these works. Torfaen County Borough Council would need to bid for this funding each financial year between 2019-22.

Mark Panniers explained the requirement to review the Integrated Network Map every three years and confirmed that this review would involve Cwmbran Community Council. The Council could expect to hear from Torfaen County Borough Council at the beginning of 2010. He also referred to links between the role of Active Travel and wider, well-being objectives.

Issues raised by Members included:

- the importance of providing Active Travel links to the railway station.
- timescales for consulting the Council on the review of the Active Travel arrangements.

- the need to ensure sufficient lighting in subways and clearly identify pathways, Safe Routes to Schools etc. via use of safety features such as painted white lines .
- the need for pedestrian and cycle access over the canal.
- progress in relation to previously suggested Active Travel routes.
- the provision of ward-by-ward maps showing the Active Travel routes and areas of open space.
- links between Active Travel and the Open Space Assessment & Mapping Exercise.

Mark Panniers agreed to provide the Clerk with a link to the appropriate website to allow Members to view the Network Map.

It was recommended that

- (1) the Clerk obtain a link showing existing Active Travel routes.
- (2) the Clerk to investigate the possibility of obtaining maps showing the location of all Active Travel routes in all wards of Cwmbran.
- (3) the Clerk to investigate the possibility of obtaining copies of maps showing public rights of way in Cwmbran.

ESP18/067 Neighbourhood Services

Members had been asked to provide advance notice of any matters they wished to raise with the Executive Members (Torfaen County Borough Council). No matters had been raised.

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

ESP18/068 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.

ESP18/069 Task Force

Members considered performance information about the work of the Task Force, including an analysis of income levels over recent year.

Members noted that the Council had achieved success in the recent One Voice Wales Innovative Practice Awards based on the Task Force service.

Members discussed the role of the Task Force and the potential to develop the service. Options discussed included the introduction of an “apprenticeship” arrangement.

It was **recommended** that:

- (1) the information is noted.

- (2) staff are congratulated on the success of the service and the recognition resulting from the One Voice Wales Innovative Practice Awards.
- (3) further consideration is given to the potential to further develop the role of the Task Force.

Signed
(Chairman, Cwmbran Community Council)