

Minutes of a Meeting of the Policy & Finance Committee of Cwmbran Community Council held on Monday 10 June 2019 at 6.00pm in the Council Chamber, Cwmbran Community Council, Ventnor Road, Cwmbran NP44 3JY

Present Councillor SWJ Ashley (in the Chair), Councillors RH M Bennett, AL Bird, SJ Brooks, PJ Cathcart, M Day, RD Kemp, LG Johnston, M Villars, WJ Walker and DH Williams

Also David Collins (Clerk to the Council)

(No Public Participation Session was held at this meeting)

PF19/001 Appointment of Committee Chair and Membership

Members noted that, at a meeting of Cwmbran Community Council held on 15 May 2019, Councillor SWJ Ashley was appointed Chair of this Committee for the Municipal Year 2019/20. Councillor LG Johnston was appointed as Vice Chair. Membership of the committee was also approved at the Council meeting referred to.

Terms of Reference for the Committee were also agreed at the above meeting. Members were also appointed to outside bodies. Members who attended a meeting of bodies associated with the work of this committee should report back to this committee.

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

PF19/002 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were submitted from Councillors M Johnston (personal) and KK Manneh (work commitments)

PF19/003 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-pecuniary interest in Minute PF19/013 (Greenmeadow Show 8 September 2019) below

PF19/004 Itemised Schedule of Receipts & Payments (March 2019 and April 2019)

Members considered the above information, including bank reconciliation.

Issues raised by Members included:

- Torfaen County Borough Council – Drawings of the Council House (Code G10)

Members also noted that Councillor M Villars had verified the information submitted in accordance with Financial Regulations.

During the discussion Members also asked that Hearing Loop is in operation at future meetings.

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

PF19/005 Quarterly Financial Monitoring 2018/19: Quarter 4 (January, February, March 2019)

Members considered Quarterly financial monitoring of expenditure against budget.

Members asked that this information is presented in landscape format in future to make it easier to read,

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

PF19/006 Annual Return for the Year Ended 31 March 2019

Members considered the following

- (i) Annual Return & Accounting Statement
- (ii) Financial Statement
- (iii) Report of Internal Auditor
- (iv) Management Response to the internal audit report.

Issues raised by Members included:

- Work which had already been put in place in preparation for internal alterations at the Council House. Earmarked Reserves were in place for this. (Building Maintenance). External paintwork was also in need of attention in the near future.

Members noted that the Annual Return and Financial Statement must be approved by Full Council. Any audit recommendations should also be addressed by Full Council. These matters would therefore also be reported to the next Council meeting.

It was **recommended** that

- (1) the Annual Return & Accounting Statements and Financial Statements are approved.
- (2) the report of internal auditor is received.

(3) the response to the report of the internal auditor is approved.

PF19/007 Forthcoming Challenges: Summary of Forthcoming Issues:

Members considered brief reports on a number of forthcoming issues, as follows:

(i) Website Accessibility Regulations

Members noted that new regulations mean that the Council needed to examine its website to ensure compliance. The Clerk would be attending an SLCC event on 20 June 2019 to examine what the Council needs to do to ensure compliance, including manual and automated website testing, publishing and accessibility statement and the important compliance dates. In the meantime, a short commentary about the requirements was submitted.

Members confirmed the need to properly comply with the new requirements but also identified the potential for the Council's existing staff to begin preparing for the new requirements as soon as possible.

In response to other points raised by Members, the Clerk referred to recent improvements to the Council's website. These included the creation of a Members Only page and moves to introduce a flatter, "shallower" structure to the site. He also confirmed that he would be undertaking of a review of the site to remove any outdated material. The committee discussed the potential for individual Members to assist in aspects of this work by "testing" any changes to the site which were put in place.

It was **recommended** that a further report is submitted.

(ii) Governance & Accountability for Local Councils in Wales: A Practitioners Guide 2019 Edition

Members noted the current Guide explained the regulatory requirements placed on local councils in Wales. The Guide was currently under review. The review will also be discussed at the SLCC event on 20 June 2019 (see above).

Members considered that any wide ranging review of the Council's existing financial procedures was premature in advance of the new Guide, but considered minor revisions to the existing Financial Regulations in order to make electronic payments and other payments easier.

Details of all payments would continue to be reported to the earliest possible meeting of the Council's Policy & Finance Committee.

It was **recommended** that

- (1) Regulation 6 (Instructions for the Making of Payments) is amended to remove the requirement for payments made by Direct Debit, Standing Order, BACS/CHAPS and Internet Banking to be signed or evidenced by two Members.
- (2) Regulation 6 is further amended to remove the words “If thought appropriate by the Council.”

(iii) Making Tax Digital

Members noted that HMRC was making a number of changes to the tax regime, which included the introduction of Making Tax Digital for VAT by 1 October 2019. The implications of this for the Council were currently being examined. Members considered that it might prove necessary to draw on external expertise as part of these arrangements. The Clerk referred to discussions which had already commenced in this regard.

It was **recommended** that a further report is submitted.

PF19/008 Relief Caretaker

Members noted the Council had recently engaged the services of a local cleaning company to undertake cleaning of the Council's premises. The firm were also responsible for securing the buildings. The arrangement had coincided with a four day period while the existing caretaker/cleaner was on holiday. It had appeared to work successfully and could be used again to help cover holiday periods.

It is **recommended** that the above arrangement is utilised again as circumstances require.

PF19/009 Cwmbran Community Council Annual Report 2019

Members considered a draft Annual Report. The Report reflected the ways in which the Council would help contribute to the wider goals of the Torfaen Public Services Board. Members noted that cover pictures would be updated to refer to 2018/19 events.

Issues raised by Members included:

- the need to include Contact Details to allow the public to submit views on the way in which the Council proposed to respond to the goals of the Torfaen Public Services Board.
- the need to quote the source of welfare advice statistics included within the report.

- the need to make the front cover clearer by using less Event Posters.

It was **recommended** that

- (a) subject to the above amendments, the Annual Report is approved.
- (b) the Council continues to work towards the objectives referred to in the report during the coming year.

PF19/010 Torfaen Public Services Board Annual Report

Members noted that Councillor SJ Brooks, who represented town & community councils on the Torfaen Public Services Board (PSB), had recently assisted with the making of a short film for the above annual report. The film could be viewed at the Torfaen PSB website from 3 July 2019. A link would be circulated. Councillor Brooks described some of the governance and operational arrangements of the PSB. In particular, he paid tribute to the way in which the PSB made provision for town & community representation, which was unique locally.

The PSB was required to produce and publish annual reports relating to delivery of their well-being plans. The Annual reports must be scrutinised and Members noted that a meeting of the Torfaen Public Services Board Overview & Scrutiny Committee was taking place on 12 June, 2019 3.00 pm. As the meeting was open to the public this therefore provided community councillors with another opportunity to learn about the work of the PSB.

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

PF19/011 Motions for 2019 One Voice Wales Annual General Meeting (AGM)

Members noted that Councils had been invited to propose a maximum of two motions for debate at the AGM on Saturday 5 October 2019. Details of the arrangements for submitting a Motion were reported.

The Clerk undertook to provide Members with an explanation of how much notice the Council had received about these arrangements.

Councillor Brooks explained some of the governance arrangements relating to the work of One Voice Wales and the challenges the organisation faced in relation to the AGM. He also referred to recent discussions about the future of local government at a One Voice Wales meeting he had attended.

It was **recommended** that the above arrangements are noted.

(Clerk's note; the Council received notification from One Voice Wales about the arrangement for submitting a Motion to the AGM on 29 April 2019. Information was circulated to all Members on 22 May 2019.)

PF19/012 Cwmbran Celtic Football Club

Members considered a request for support for the club's bid for a grant to the Welsh Government Community Facilities Programme.

It was **recommended** that the Chairman of the Council write a letter of support to the Football Club on behalf of the Council.

PF19/013 Greenmeadow Show 8 September 2019

Councillor SWJ Ashley declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item.

Members considered a request to sponsor the Jeff Williams Shield in the above show. The shield was awarded for the most points achieved in the children's classes. (£513 in total.)

It was **recommended** that the Clerk establish further details of the request, including details of previous sponsors.

PF19/014 Big Event 2019

Members offered initial observations on the success of the 2019 Big Event, pending a full report to the Events & Community Projects Committee.

Members considered that the event had been a success and paid tribute to the hard work of the Council's staff who had delivered the event. Issues raised by Members included:

- the potential to provide a wider range of stalls in future.
- positive feedback from visitors.
- the wide range of activities and attractions available, including the "Cwmbran Dinosaur" and Raft Race.
- the potential to review the location of the Council's own stand at future events.
- the potential to include application forms for Task Force customers in Handbooks distributed at future events.
- location and size of the stage.
- the potential to introduce a second stage.

It was **recommended** that a detailed report is submitted to a meeting of the Council's Events & Community Projects Committee, incorporating the above observations.

PF19/015 Seminars & Outside Bodies

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

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| (i) One Voice Wales Larger Councils Committee | 17 April 2019 |
| (ii) One Voice Wales Gwent Valleys Area Committee | 30 April 2019 |

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

PF19 /016 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.

PF19 /017 Staffing Matters

Members considered a report in relation to current staffing matters and options to deal with current pressures.

It is **recommended** that the contract of the existing Member of staff who had been covering maternity leave to 31 August 2019 is made permanent with effect from 1 September 2019 (3 days a week.)

Signed
(Chairman, Cwmbran Community Council)