

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Policy & Finance Committee of Cwmbran Community Council held on Monday 9 September 2019 at 6.00pm in the Council Chamber, Cwmbran Community Council, Ventnor Road, Cwmbran NP44 3JY**

**Present** Councillor SWJ Ashley (in the Chair), Councillors AL Bird, SJ Brooks, PJ Cathcart, M Johnston, M Villars, WJ Walker and DH Williams

Also David Collins (Clerk to the Council)

**Absent** Councillors RhM Bennett, N Hopkins, RD Kemp, KK Manneh

*(No Public Participation Session was held at this meeting)*

**PF19/027 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for Absence were accepted from Councillors M Day (sickness), N Hopkins (sickness) and KK Manneh (work commitments)

**PF19/028 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-pecuniary interest in Minute PF19/043 (Regeneration Proposal: Tynewydd Farm Close Access) below. He remained in the meeting during the discussion of the item but took no part in the discussion.

**PF19/029 Itemised Schedule of Receipts & Payments (June & July 2019)**

Members considered the above information, including bank reconciliations. Issues raised by Members included:

- House of Flags – Rope (G10)
- Unpresented Cheques (Grants and Primary Schools Choral Festival)
  
- Cwmbran Big Event (L05B) Members noted that Mr Jerry Adams, who had attended the Big Event with his large dinosaur model, had recently passed away. The dinosaur had been a popular attraction at the Big Event

It was **recommended** that

- (1) the information is noted.
- (2) the Clerk is asked to confirm details of current unpresented cheques.
- (3) a letter of condolence is sent from the Chairman of the Council to the family of Mr Jerry Adams.

**PF19/030      Quarterly Financial Monitoring 2018/19: Quarter 1 (April, May, June 2019)**

Members considered quarterly financial monitoring of expenditure against budget.

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

**PF19/031      Annual Return for the Year Ended 31 March 2019**

Members noted that Notice of Conclusion of the Audit had been published on 2 September 2019.

The Annual Return was presented to the Members now that the external audit opinion had been given. The Council was asked to approve and accept the Annual Return.

An Issues Arising report received from the auditor was also presented. The Council was required to implement the recommendations in the Report. It was proposed that the recommendations are implemented. In particular, Standing Orders and Financial Regulations would be reviewed during the current year. The dates of the review would be recorded as recommended in the Issues Arising Report. The auditor had also recommended that larger contracts should be the subject of invitation to tender.

It was **recommended** that

- (1) the above information is noted.
- (2) the recommendations in the Issues Arising Report are accepted.
- (3) the Annual Return is approved.
- (4) the above matters are also reported to Full Council.

**PF19/032      Audit Plan 2019/2020**

Members considered a draft Audit Plan and annual review of internal audit. The plan and review had been the subject of consultation the Council's internal auditor.

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

**PF19/033      Expenditure Against Budgets**

Members noted the following additional expenditure approved in accordance with Financial Regulation 4.4

Computer, Website & IT Support (Code H05) (2018/19) to report an overspend of £1,326.55 against budget of £5,150. This arose from the need to upgrade the PSBA line to improve web capacity at the Council House. Costs were shared with Torfaen County Borough Council and are not expected to arise again in the current year. Details were reported to Members on 10 June 2019 as part of wider budget monitoring (Minute PF19/005) and on 3 December 2018 (Minute PF18/061). Other obsolete equipment had also been replaced.

It was **recommended** that the above expenditure is noted and endorsed.

**PF19/034 Risk Register 2019/2020**

Members considered a draft Risk Register (including Executive Summary) for the current year. The Register included details of key projects such as the Big Event and Summer Playschemes. The Clerk drew attention to comments made by the Council's External Auditor about the need to review Standing Orders and Financial Regulations (Minute PF19/031 refers). He also highlighted the importance of insurance.

It was **recommended** that

- (1) subject to the amendment of item 1.2 to confirm that Standing Orders and Financial Regulations would be the subject of annual review, the Risk Register is approved.
- (2) existing Financial regulations and Standing Orders be reviewed in the current calendar year.
- (3) the Council confirms that satisfactory and appropriate arrangements for insurance cover in respect of all insurable risks are in place.

**PF19/035 Pay Policy 2019/2020**

Members considered a draft Pay Policy.

It was **recommended** that the Pay Policy is approved.

**PF19/036 CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund**

The Council has approved an Investment Strategy for the current year. (Minute PF18/097 refers.) Members had also considered the potential to invest in the CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund and asked for a detailed report, with particular reference to ethical implications of the Fund. (Minute PF18/098 refers).

Although the Fund was supported by a number of other Public Sector bodies the overriding priority for the Fund was to achieve low risk (AAA) by placing cash deposits with a large number of counterparties. Counterparties' environmental, social and governance risk management was monitored on a regular basis and further action taken if necessary. Research was based on external data sources and the work of an Ethical & Responsible Investment team. However the primary objective was to maintain the net asset value of the Fund at par (net of earnings). The Fund aimed to maximise current income consistent with the preservation of principal and liquidity by investing in a diversified portfolio of high quality sterling denominated deposits and instruments.

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

**PF19/037**

**GDPR**

Members considered proposed changes to the Council's Privacy notice and Retention Policy as part of their commitment to keep GDPR issues under review.

It was **recommended** that the revised Privacy notice and Retention Policy are approved.

**PF19/038**

**Website Accessibility Regulations/Website**

The Clerk described a series of recent improvements made to the Council's website as part of the preparations to implement the Website Accessibility Regulations. These included the creation of an archive section for agendas and minutes to help respond to any FOI requests. He also described the considerable challenges which the regulations would bring. Members noted that advice had been sought from SRS about ways in which Torfaen County Borough Council would be responding to the regulations, in order that the Council could learn any lessons.

Members discussed ways in which the voluntary sector and others could contribute to the way in which the Council worked.

Members also discussed the use of Welsh on the Council's website. The Clerk explained the current legal position in relation to the Welsh Language Scheme.

It was **recommended** that

- (1) Further enquiries are made with other external partners, such as Torfaen Voluntary Alliance, the Information Commissioner's Office or the private sector to obtain advice on ways in which the Council could meet the challenges of the above regulations.
- (2) A review of the Council's existing Welsh language Scheme is undertaken to ensure that the website met the requirements of the Scheme.
- (3) Councillor DH Williams is authorised to report to the next meeting on the potential to work with bodies such as the Community Health Council (CHC), with particular reference to the potential to invite the CHC to take part in the Big Event.

**PF19/039**

**Governance & Accountability for Local Councils in Wales: A Practitioners Guide 2019 Edition**

Members noted the new Guide has now been received. (178 pages.) The Guidance must be applied for financial years commencing on or after 1 April 2019. New Guidance on Model Financial Regulations had also been received. This information would be studied to ensure that the Council meets its statutory responsibilities. Any resultant changes to Financial Regulations etc. would be reported, as part of the Review referred to item 5 above. (Minute PF19/031 refers)

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

**PF19/040 Maintenance Matters**

Members noted a number of recent improvements to the layout and appearance of some of the rooms at the Council House. These improvements, carried out over the summer recess, included tidying of the two kitchens, improvements to photocopying/filing room and new features in the Council Chamber, such as a Members' Library. Pictures had also been erected in the new accommodation, reflecting the commercial history of Cwmbran New Town.

Enquiries were also being made in relation to the curtains in the Council Chamber. Members identified potential contractors and suppliers who might be able to assist in relation to the curtains.

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

**PF19/041 Torfaen Public Service Board (PSB) Annual Report**

In considering the above report, Members asked that a progress report about the work of the PSB and in particular, the implications for Town & Community Councils, is submitted to the next meeting of the committee. (Minute PF19/023 refers). Members noted that a video describing the contribution of town & community councils to the work of the PSB had been produced. The video features Councillor SJ Brooks, who represented town & community councils on the PSB. The video was available on the Council's website.

The website also featured information about consultation being undertaken by the Future Generation Commissioner for Wales.

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

**PF19/042 Vacancies on Governing Bodies**

Members considered an application for a vacancy as the Council's representative on the Governing Body of Woodlands Primary School. The application, from Mr RN White, was supported by the school.

It was **recommended** that the application from Mr White is approved.

**PF19/043 Regeneration Proposal: Tynewydd Farm Close Access**

Councillor SWJ Ashley declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute PF19/043 (Regeneration Proposal: Tynewydd Farm Close Access) below. He remained in the meeting during the discussion of the item but took no part in the discussion.

On 8 July 2019, Members considered a report to fund a potential regeneration project at Pontnewydd. (Minute PF19/025 refers). Members recommended that the Clerk make further enquiries about the powers available to the Council to implement the proposal. Advice has been sought from One Voice Wales. The advice confirmed that the Council could rely on the Power of Well-Being to support this expenditure. Such an investment would enhance

the social well-being of the area as it related to those that would benefit from this proposal. Detailed guidance on the power is available from the Clerk.

Members discussed the proposal at length, with particular reference to the responsibility of Torfaen County Borough Council to carry out such works, the extent to which the project could be seen as a “regeneration” project, the extent to which such a project would set a precedent, the importance of ensuring that the Council did not commit any expenditure until all finance and other approvals were in place and the need for fully costed project planning arrangements.

Following a vote, it was agreed to take no action (4 votes to 2).

It was **recommended** that no further action is taken.

**PF19/044 Seminars & Outside Bodies**

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

- (i) One Voice Wales Innovative Practice Conference 10 July 2019
- (ii) One Voice Wales Gwent Valleys Partnership 30 July 2019

The Leader reported a change to the chairmanship of this committee. He also commented on some of the governance issues which currently faced One Voice Wales.

- (iii) Local Councils in Partnership Committee 5 September 2019

Members noted that Torfaen Voluntary Alliance would be visiting the Council to take forward an exercise in relation to mapping of community facilities. All Members had been encouraged to identify facilities in their wards for inclusion in the exercise.

Consultation meetings would also be held in the south, mid, north of the borough, dates and venues agreed by all. All Members are encouraged to attend and advertise through their networks.

Members also suggested that consultants undertaking the Torfaen Shared Green Infrastructure Strategy Action Plan are asked to submit an update on their work to the Council’s Environment, Sustainability & Planning Committee.

Members noted that a revised Charter would be submitted to the next meeting of the Policy & Finance Committee.

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

*Signed* .....  
(Chairman, Cwmbran Community Council)