

Minutes of a Meeting of the Policy & Finance Committee of Cwmbran Community Council held on Monday 21 October 2019 at 6.00pm in the Council Chamber, Cwmbran Community Council, Ventnor Road, Cwmbran NP44 3JY

Present Councillor SWJ Ashley (Chair), Councillors Rh M Bennett, AL Bird, SJ Brooks, PJ Cathcart, M Day, M Johnston, RD Kemp, KK Manneh, M Villars, WJ Walker and DH Williams

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

Absent Councillors N Hopkins and LG Johnston

(No Public Participation Session was held at this meeting)

PF19/045 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were accepted from Councillor N Hopkins (work commitments)

PF19/046 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.

PF19/047 Itemised Schedule of Receipts & Payments (August & September 2019)

Members considered the above information, including bank reconciliations.

Members noted information reported by the Clerk in relation to unpresented cheques.

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

PF19/048 Quarterly Financial Monitoring 2019/20: Quarter 2 (July, August, September 2019)

Members considered quarterly financial monitoring of expenditure against budget. The information would help Members in budget setting ahead of preparation of estimates for the current year.

The Clerk elaborated on matters included within the information distributed.

Members expressed their appreciation to the Administrative Officer for her role in producing the information.

It was **recommended** that

(1) the information is noted.

(2) forthcoming expenditure of £28,000 within Code C01A (Pension Deficit) is noted and confirmed.

- (3) expenditure against budget within Code N07 (Environmental Awards & Contributions) is noted and confirmed (Minute PF19/024 refers.)

PF19/049 Making Tax Digital

The Clerk reported that Council had now filled its VAT Return digitally in accordance with the appropriate requirements. (Minute CL19/035 refers)

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

PF19/050 Charter: Torfaen County Borough Council and Town & Community Councils

Members considered a revised Charter, which governed the relationship between Torfaen County Borough Council and Town & Community Councils.

Issues raised by Members included:

- disappointment at recent incidents of Torfaen County Borough Council's failure to consult or notify Cwmbran Community Council.
(Section 4 of Charter refers)
- the importance of Members taking advantage of consultation opportunities provided.
(Section 4 of Charter refers)
- disappointment that Community Councillors were not permitted to speak at Members' Seminars arranged by Torfaen County Borough Council
(Members considered that allowing Members of the Council to speak at the seminars could encourage greater attendance.)
(Section 4 of Charter refers)
- arrangements in relation to vexatious complaints.
(Section 10 of Charter refers)
- the importance of introducing effective Service Level Agreements to govern any partnership arrangements.
(Section 12 of Charter refers)
- the importance of keeping the Charter under review to ensure that it added value. (Members noted that the Charter would be monitored by the Local Councils in Partnership Committee (LCP) and that the reports of meetings of the LCP were submitted to the Policy & Finance Committee on a regular basis.)
(Section 15 of Charter refers)
- the overall importance of having a Charter in place. (The Charter is encouraged as Best Practice by Welsh Government.)

Members supported the Charter in principle, which they hoped would lead to improved dialogue with Torfaen County Borough Council but asked that the above comments are taken forward.

It was **recommended** that

- (1) the Charter is approved in principle.
- (2) the concerns expressed above are referred to the Local Councils in Partnership Committee to help inform the future of the relationship between Torfaen County Borough Council and town & community councils.

PF19/051 Flexible Working Hours

Members considered a revised policy. The policy was last reviewed in 2017 and a review was therefore timely. The policy had been the subject of discussion with staff and the Council's HR consultants. In particular, Members noted that any accumulated time off in lieu was to be used in the current pay period. This constituted a change to contracts.

It was **recommended** that the revised policy is approved.

PF19/052 Standing Orders 2019/20

Members considered draft Standing Orders.

It was **recommended** that the Standing Orders are approved.

PF19/053 Standing Orders relating to Contracts 2019/20

Members considered draft Standing Orders.

It was **recommended** that the Standing Orders relating to contracts are approved.

PF19/054 Maintenance Matters

Members noted recent initiatives to include the appearance and efficiency of the Council House. These include proposals to replace the curtains in the Council Chamber and a new electronic display screen to help promote the Council's services. These would be funded from within existing resources.

It was **recommended** that the actions taken are endorsed.

PF19/055 Website

Members noted that the Council's website was hosted and supported by SRS Shared Resource Service. However the Council had recently been informed that this support can no longer be continued. Discussions were taking place about different solutions and the level of support which could be provided in the meantime. A letter was to be sent from Torfaen County Borough Council as the decision maker, on the reasons for this and the support which could be provided until a move. The Clerk elaborated on the reasons why the support was being withdrawn. A meeting had been requested with SRS to discuss our business relationship with them.

It was **recommended** that the Council examine options to move towards other means of hosting the website.

PF19/056 Torfaen Public Services Board (PSB)

Members received an oral update on arising from a Workshop on 15 October 2019 to inform the PSB's future Risk Register. The Chairman and Clerk had attended, along with Councillor SJ Brooks, who represented Town & Community Councils on the PSB. Members noted that the workshop had provided a useful opportunity about issues concerning the work of the PSB along, Well-being works and links to established "5 Ways of Working."

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

PF19/057 Request for Funding: Llantarnam Grange Arts Centre – Saturday Art Club

Members considered a request for funding to allow local children to experience regular arts activity outside of school. Members considered the request in detail and discussed the options for providing support. Issues raised by Members included:

- existing core funds already provided to the Arts Centre by the Council.
- alternative funding options and partnership opportunities available to the Arts Centre.
- clarification about the request to fund promotional materials, including the use of social media.
- the possibility of examining a clearer break down of costs.
- discussion around potential numbers of children taking part in the project.

Following a vote, it was recommended to support the application in part.

It was **recommended** that the Council contribute the sum of £700 towards tutor fees and workshop materials from within funds allocated for Youth Engagement. (Code I11) (Local Government Act 1972 s145)

PF19/058 Seminars & Outside Bodies

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

- (i) South Wales Larger Councils Forum 4 October 2019

Members noted that the Leader and Clerk had arranged to visit Llanelli Town Council to discuss the role of the Community Development Officer on 1 November 2019.

- (ii) Understanding Welsh Places: Website Launch 8 October 2019

Members noted that the Understanding Welsh Places website included information about Cwmbran.

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

PF19/059 Exclusion of the Press & Public

In view of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, it is **recommended** 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.

PF19/060 Staffing Matters

Members considered a report, which updated and consolidated the Council's current staffing arrangements. Members noted some minor adjustments which had been made to some grades.

Members also endorsed updates to staff's Statements of Material Terms etc. to reflect new legislation etc. These had been discussed with staff.

It was **recommended** that

- (1) the above arrangements are noted and confirmed.
- (2) the revised grading structure (including adjustments) is approved for all staff.

Signed
(Chairman, Cwmbran Community Council)