

COMMUNITY LIAISON COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting held on 2nd July, 2019.

Present: Councillor Mrs. S.M. Hanks (Chairman); Councillor Ms. R.M. Birch (Vice-Chairman); Councillors Ms. J. Aviet, G.D.D. Carroll, Mrs. C.A. Cave, N.P. Hodges, M.J.G. Morgan, A.C. Parker, R.A. Penrose, Mrs. S.D. Perkes, A.R. Robertson and M.R. Wilson.

Representing Town and Community Councils:

Councillors S. Hodges (Barry Town Council), M. Cuddy (Penarth Town Council), S. Griffiths (Dinas Powys Community Council), P.A. Carreyett (Llandough Community Council), J. Teague (Llanfair Community Council), H. Baker (Ewenny Community Council), G. Smith (Llanmaes Community Council), D. Moody-Jones (Peterston-Super-Ely Community Council), J. Sullivan (St. Athan Community Council), H. Morris (St. Brides Major Community Council) and I. Perry (St. Nicholas and Bonvilston Community Council).

124 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from Councillor V.J. Bailey; Councillors J. Powell (St. Georges and St. Brides Super Ely Community Council), S. Parnell (Pendoylan Community Council) and R. Thomas (Llandow Community Council).

125 MINUTES –

AGREED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 26th March, 2019 be approved as a correct record.

126 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations were received.

127 POLICE MATTERS –

Police Inspector Andrew Rice provided the Committee with an update on Police matters in the Vale of Glamorgan as outlined below.

Barry Island Disorder

On Easter Monday at Barry Island a large disturbance had been reported where two groups of youths embarked on a confrontation that was captured on camera and immediately circulated on social media. Images of the males throwing metal signs across the road appeared in the South Wales Echo, calling it the Barry Island Brawl

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on their front page. While the incident had not been as significant as made out in the media, it had been frightening for those families in the vicinity at the time.

Seven males had been arrested and interviewed, with another seven identified who will be spoken to subsequently.

The Police Inspector noted that the summer long operation was in full swing with extra Police resources which were on Barry Island on busy weekends and Bank Holidays to ensure that thousands of visitors and residents enjoyed the attractions of the Island safely without fear of crime. Police would be working with colleagues from British Transport Police and the Vale of Glamorgan Council until September to ensure the restrictions of alcohol consumption governed by the Public Spaces Protection Order for the location were adhered to and any anti-social behaviour was swiftly addressed. This operation was in addition to the Police involvement in the planning of many of the forthcoming events such as the Barry 10k Run, GlastonBarry and Cadstock to name but a few, so a busy period lay ahead. Extra resources were also being invested into the night time economy in Barry

Rogue Traders in the Vale of Glamorgan

On 25th June, 2019 an 89 year old female was targeted by rogue traders who charged her an exorbitant price for relaying some patio slabs in Barry. Police were notified by the bank that the lady had entered the branch with a male and withdrawn a significant sum of money and staff became suspicious, contacting the Police. Officers promptly attended and established that three individuals from Cardiff had charged over £4,000 for moving some patio slabs and they were immediately arrested. The investigation was being progressed by Trading Standards and the suspects had been released without charge while that investigation progressed.

The Police Inspector stated that they were looking to banks in future to contact Police if unusual sums had been taken out on behalf of elderly clients.

Youth Annoyance in Penarth

Officers from Penarth had been tackling underage drinking and anti-social behaviour in the town over recent weekends. A growing number of complaints culminated in an incident on Friday, 31st May, 2019 when up to 50 youths gathered in the grounds of Old Penarthians Rugby Club, drinking alcohol, being rowdy and allegedly using drugs. A 14 year old from Barry had subsequently been charged with assault on an emergency services worker and convicted at Youth Court. Over 10 of the youths were currently in transit through the Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) process as a result of the incident. A dedicated operation to clamp down on anti-social behaviour had commenced and would continue into the summer. Also in response to the recent events, officers from the Vale of Glamorgan Community Safety Partnership working with partners had set up the Penarth Community Alcohol Partnership to educate retailers, families and young people regarding the dangers of excessive alcohol.

Drugs Activity in Penarth and Llantwit Major

On Friday, May 24th, Operation Carrasco saw officers from Penarth and Llantwit Major Neighbourhood Teams and specialist resources working together with British Transport Police colleagues targeting the use and supply of controlled drugs. The operation focused on drug dealers using the rail network to facilitate distribution of drugs in the area and two arrests had been made at Llantwit Major Train Station for possession of cannabis. Following activity at the station, officers were joined by colleagues from Licensing and visited two Public Houses following intelligence received regarding the use and supply of class A drugs. No offences were apparent during the visit however officers would continue to monitor activities and intelligence linked to these premises and react accordingly.

Joint Operation at Cardiff International Airport

Although the Police Inspector commented that knife crime was not significant for the Police in the Vale at present he did not take this for granted; recently officers from the Vale of Glamorgan had held a series of operations, working with the UK Border Agency to tackle the importation of bladed weapons into Cardiff International Airport. Flights from a number of countries had been targeted following the receipt of intelligence indicating weapons destined for the streets of Wales were being brought in via the airport. No weapons were found during the exercise but in terms of education and prevention it was a significant success. Further large scale multi-agency operations were planned over the summer at the airport as part of Police efforts to curb serious violence.

Loose Horses in the Vale of Glamorgan

Officers in the Vale were working closely with Local Authority colleagues and other partners to address the issue of fly grazing and loose horses across the Vale of Glamorgan. The Police were aware of the impact on residents and the animals themselves that this issue caused and plans had been drawn up, following a series of partnership meetings, in order to tackle the problem.

A Community Councillor referred to the use of portable barbeques on common land in St. Brides which had become more frequent and when residents or the public approached people about the usage they had received abuse. The Community Councillor asked if it was possible to have a sign put up curtailing such barbeques. The Police Inspector stated that this was a matter for the Local Authority and he also stated that increased policing in these areas would have a knock on effect on other areas but would ask the local PCSOs to review this matter and look at patrolling these areas. The Community Councillor also mentioned that human waste was being left on common ground with residents having to clear this up. The Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer stated they would refer these matters to the Director of Environment and Housing.

A Committee Member mentioned that there were horses escaping from a nearby field onto playing fields in Llandough. The Police Inspector stated that the Vale of

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Glamorgan Council was already looking at this matter and had issued an Improvement Notice.

A Committee Member commented on traffic congestion in Penarth, particularly around Hickman and Windsor Road and referring to the issues caused by traffic cones and barrels being put out on the roads by tradesmen which caused parking issues in the rest of Penarth as cars had to park elsewhere. The Police Inspector responded by stating that there had to be some acceptance of congestion in certain areas of Penarth due to tradesmen parking in order to deliver barrels and other goods to other businesses, so some degree of reasonableness would be needed, particularly if the obstruction was only temporary. The Police Inspector also stated that PCSOs regularly liaised with local government departments. The Committee Member made a further enquiry about looking at delivery hours and whether these could be regulated or regularised and also if parking issues needed to be looked at again. Finally, the Committee Member asked if there were links on the Vale of Glamorgan website for minutes regarding the Vale Partnership. The Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer advised that they would speak to the relevant officer regarding this.

It was

AGREED – T H A T Police Inspector Rice be thanked for his presentation.

128 TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCIL ELECTION COSTS (MD) –

The report was presented by the Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal and Democratic Services, following a request for consideration by Llandough Community Council. The report provided information on how the recharges were calculated for Town and Community Council elections and by-elections.

The Returning Officer had a personal responsibility for the conduct of local elections and was directly accountable to the courts as an independent statutory office holder. The report considered options, where applicable, for reducing the cost of elections and by-elections. The report highlighted that some costs were currently absorbed by the Vale of Glamorgan Council and not recharged to Town and Community Councils, for instance the production and printing of casual vacancy notices, special leave for Vale of Glamorgan Council staff, payroll costs, the use of election equipment and stationery and the use of committee rooms. VAT may be recovered by Town and Community Councils. Since the local government elections in May 2017 28 casual vacancy notices for Town and Community Councils had been published within the Vale of Glamorgan, six had proceeded to a by-election. Therefore, on average around 79% of Casual Vacancies were filled by co-option. The current practice was that there were no recharges for the production and publication of casual vacancy notices. Every attempt was made to ensure best value was obtained by following the procurement policy of the Vale of Glamorgan Council in obtaining three quotes for the production and printing of stationery used, e.g. ballot papers, poll cards and postal voting packs. When issuing an invoice to the Town and Community Councils, a two year payment plan was offered to spread the cost.

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It was imperative that all Town or Community Councils took into account the cost of full local government elections every five years (previously four years) and potential by-elections when setting their precepts. The cost of elections would vary and could not be set in advance due to evolving changes to electorate figures, number of postal voters, the cost and production of printing at the time of the poll, postage costs at the time of the poll and hire costs of polling stations at the time of the poll. The Welsh Assembly was considering the Senedd and Elections (Wales) Bill which would reduce the voting age for Welsh Assembly Elections to 16 year olds; following on from this the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill would also potentially reduce the voting age at Local Government Elections to 16 year olds. Therefore, in 2022 all community wards may see an increase in their electorate.

Due to the financial pressures in the public sector, the Vale of Glamorgan Council had since 2010 been required to make savings of £55 million. In 2019/20 the Council would need to find savings of an additional £3 million and in 2020/2022 a further £12 million worth of savings would need to be found. The Vale of Glamorgan Council was therefore neither in a position to absorb the cost of elections or by-elections for Town and Community Councils, nor would it be appropriate given that Town and Community Councils were separate legal entities to the Vale of Glamorgan Council.

The Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal and Democratic Services subsequently referred to the paragraphs 3.7 – 3.13 of the report including:

Hire of Polling Stations - the Electoral Registration Officer / Returning Officer had a statutory duty to ensure there was a designated polling place for each polling district unless the size or other circumstances of a polling district are such that the situation of the polling station did not materially affect the convenience of the electors. The Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal and Democratic Services encouraged Town and Community Councils to make representations regarding the number and location of polling stations in respect of their individual Councils as part of the pending review of polling districts, polling places and polling stations. This took place every five years and the next one was scheduled for consultation in September 2019. The cost of polling stations varied throughout the Vale of Glamorgan as the re-charges were based on the hire costs of each venue. If a permanent venue could not be established the polling station allocated may be a portacabin. Should a portacabin be required this could significantly impact on the overall costs as the price of hiring a portacabin, portaloos and generator would be recharged, which was approximately £1,000. It was the Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal and Democratic Services' view that the use of portacabins should be minimised.

Proposals for electoral reform in the UK included the option of electronic voting and digital alternatives for the poll which to date had involved consultations and pilot schemes. Should electronic voting be introduced then cost savings would be made in the hire of polling stations.

Poll Cards - a quote from three suppliers was required to ensure the most effective service and best value was received for the cards as well as postage. The legislation

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provided a detailed specification on the ballot paper requirements and the Town or Community Council was recharged the exact amount invoiced to the Vale of Glamorgan Council.

The volume of postal mailers produced was determined by the number of postal voters in the community ward which had significantly increased over the past decade. A postal mailer consisted of the postal vote statement, an explanatory insert, business reply envelope, ballot paper and outgoing envelope. Both the legislative requirements and Royal Mail specifications must be adhered to for postal voters. Postal mailers were sent first class using Royal Mail to ensure they were delivered promptly giving electors plenty of time to complete and return their ballot packs. A discount of clean mail advance was used with Royal Mail and the Town and Community Council was recharged the amount invoiced by Royal Mail. Postal mailers may also be delivered by hand, however this was not deemed a viable option by the Returning Officer as the process would include the recruitment of canvassers, administration of canvass rounds, and payment to canvassers. Postal voting also formed part of the Council's integrity planning to which there a higher risk of fraud, reducing the number of people that handled postal votes assisted in reducing potential election fraud. Furthermore, all postal voting packs included a first class business reply envelope, the specification of the envelope was set by Royal Mail to ensure priority returns to the Vale of Glamorgan Council. The cost recharged to the Town or Community Council was determined by the response rate of the postal vote electors. Therefore, the amount recharged to the Town or Community Council was the exact amount invoiced by Royal Mail. As would be appreciated, Electors may also hand deliver their postal ballot packs to the Civic Offices or a polling station on poll day.

The Monitoring Officer/Head of Legal and Democratic Services also referred to paragraph 3.14 of the report regarding staff fees stating that the Returning Officer Fee was set over ten years ago; the recharge was checked by a Senior Accountant and approved by the Section 151 Officer of the Vale of Glamorgan Council and the Town or Community Council was recharged the amount paid to the Returning Officer. Whenever possible, Polls would be combined in order to minimise the recharge to Town and Community Councils, and this was the case in February 2019 by-election for the Rhoose Ward of the Vale of Glamorgan Council which was combined with the by-election for the Cowbridge with Llanblethian Town Council, Llanblethian East Ward. The Vale of Glamorgan Council did not currently re-charge Town and Community Councils for the Special Leave cost incurred. The Vale of Glamorgan Council also absorbed the cost of providing training and conducting the payroll functions for election staff. Also, an opportunity had arisen to reduce staff fees for the verification and count – for example, to conduct the verification and count as swiftly as possible to ensure the declaration of results was announced promptly; however, the number of count staff could also be reduced which would marginally reduce costs – but, this would mean the declaration of results could take longer.

The Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal and Democratic Services stated there was no re-charge for the use of election equipment such as polling booths, ballot boxes and

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signage and for the hire of committee rooms at the Civic Offices. Town and Community Councils may recover the VAT incurred.

Finally, it was asked that Town and Community Councils respond to the review of polling districts, polling places and polling stations which would be subject to consultation in September 2019, to consider the number of count agents recruited for the poll and recover the VAT incurred in respect of the cost of the election or by-election.

Following the presentation of the Report, a question and answer session then ensued.

Question	Response
Were the charges mentioned just for local elections?	The charges were for both local and by-elections, and would need to be met by Town and Community Councils.
A Community Council had received a bill for £4,500 from the Vale as a result of a recent by-election. As a result, a number of by-elections in a local community could cause financial issues which would wipe out the precept. This could also drive Community Councils to co-opt them thereby harming local democracy. Could a fixed fee based on the overall size of the relevant Council be used in order to limit costs?	The Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal and Democratic Services stated they would be happy to look at the costs with the local clerk - a detailed breakdown would have been provided to the local Community or Town Council. The law also dictated if ten electors called for an election it would be called. The comments on a fixed fee were noted, however, the cost varied dependant primarily on the number of electors, printing costs, number and type of polling stations and number of postal votes.
Could social media be used instead of polling cards?	Polling cards are a means of raising awareness and encouraging voter turnout, as well as best practice. If there were no poll cards the potential would be a significant drop in voting numbers.
Was there a Returning Officer Forum whereby such issues could be discussed?	An Electoral Commission Board met on a quarterly basis to discuss good practice.
What would happen if Town and Community Councils could not afford an election?	The costs incurred could be spread over a couple of years.
Could local public houses or other buildings be encouraged to act as polling stations instead of portacabins?	Yes, subject to suitable facilities being available and agreement being reached.
When would the minutes of the Community Liaison meeting be completed by and if the clerks could be informed once done?	The Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer (DSO) replied that the minutes were usually produced within three weeks of the meeting and then uploaded onto the Vale of Glamorgan Council's website. To assist members the DSO

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	agreed that in future she would advise all Town and Community Council clerks when the minutes had been uploaded.
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A Town Councillor stated that they and One Voice Wales had spoken with the Welsh Assembly Minister regarding election costs, with the view to potential legislation in this area.

A Community Councillor also stated that their Community Council was the smallest in the Vale and its budget would be wiped out if there were a number of elections or by-elections, it would become insolvent and not be able to function. He also stated that the issue of schools not being used all the time meant a portacabin would need to be set up when there was a local election or by-election. The Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal and Democratic Services, referring to the use of portacabins, stated if there were no alternatives then a portacabin may be the only option – however, all options would be considered.

AGREED –

- (1) T H A T the report be noted.
- (2) T H A T in advance of each by-election Poll the relevant Clerk of the Town or Community Council advise the Returning Officer of the preferred number of Count Assistants to be employed.
- (3) T H A T Town and Community Councils participate in the polling districts, places and stations review scheduled for consultation in September 2019.

129 DEVELOPMENT OF THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL CORPORATE PLAN 2020-25 (MD) –

The Head of Policy and Business Transformation provided a presentation on how the Council would be developing its new Corporate Plan for publication in April 2020. The report itself set out the engagement undertaken to date, the timetable for developing and publishing the Plan and the approach that had been taken. The Plan also set out the Council's new Well-being Objectives which were a requirement under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and framed how the Council would contribute the National Well-being Goals and deliver its vision for Strong Communities with a Bright Future. The new Corporate Plan would build on the work undertaken in the Corporate Plan 2016-20 to deliver the Council's vision for Strong Communities with a Bright Future.

The Head of Policy and Business Transformation referred to the good aspects of the Vale of Glamorgan Council in relation to the Plan. These consisted of the Vale of Glamorgan Council being the consistently top performing Council, the Vale of Glamorgan having the best in Wales GCSE results 2018, and also positive audits and inspections across all areas.

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In referring to other service areas, it was noted that there were pressures in Education and Social Care, with significant reductions in funding year on year, an ageing population and finally, inequalities and deprivation in certain parts of the Vale. The opportunities going forward, he stated, were to deliver services differently and to engage with staff, partners and the public.

The Head of Policy and Business Transformation went on to talk about how to design the right Plan and stated the Vale of Glamorgan Council needed to embed the five ways of working in the development and delivery of the Plan, these were: involve all stakeholders, think more long term, take a more preventative approach, encourage collaboration and integrate and make the connections. He went on to say that the Corporate Plan needed to show how the Council was delivering its vision, addressing local priorities, reflecting its values, contributing to the seven National Well-being Goals and embedding the five ways of working, responding to new legislation and changes in policy and it needed to be clear how the Plan will be delivered, monitored and scrutinised.

Referring to the results of the public opinion survey, the vast majority of respondents had agreed with the current objectives. Stakeholders and the Insight Board had suggested that changes were needed to at least some objectives, such as wording and scope. Expectations for what the Council should reflect in its Corporate Plan were varied, senior managers recognised the need for a new approach and there was a need to be realistic, ambitious and reflect the connections across the Council's services.

The Head of Policy and Transformation went on to say that the Plan would be written in plain English. He also stated that seven draft objectives had been developed: -

- Objective 1 – Shaping a council fit for the future
- Objective 2 – Being part of a proud community
- Objective 3 – Supporting and caring for those in need
- Objective 4 – Encouraging good health and well-being
- Objective 5 – Respecting and valuing our environment
- Objective 6 – Looking / Planning for the future
- Objective 7 – Providing opportunities for all.

It was intended that consultation on the draft Plan would be undertaken in October and November 2019. This would allow for changes to be made and the revised Plan to be considered by the Council's Corporate and Performance Scrutiny Committee prior to the Plan being approved by Council in February 2020.

The consultation for the autumn was currently being planned and would include a range of methods for example, stakeholder meetings, online surveys and attendance at meetings of various groups and forums to engage on the Council's priorities for the coming years.

It was recommended that the Committee consider how Town and Community Councils wished to be consulted on the draft Plan in the Autumn 2019 and how they

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may be able to assist in wider consultation activities with the public and other interested parties in order to ensure Town and Community Councils and other stakeholders were actively involved in the development of the new Corporate Plan.

The Plan would be developed in tandem with discussions around the Council's budget and the next phase of the Reshaping Services programme. This would ensure that the Council's Plan set out its ambitions for the Vale of Glamorgan but that it could also be delivered.

The Annual Delivery Plan would be developed in the New Year and consulted on in the spring with the aim to publish the delivery plan in June. This was in recognition that this would be a transition year as the new Corporate Plan was developed. In future years the intention was that the Annual Delivery Plan would be published at the start of the financial year.

A Community Councillor spoke about engagement with Community Councils and offered an example of an issue they currently had around bus shelters near the Aubrey Arms where, despite his attempts to contact Highways, he had no response. The Head of Policy and Transformation stated it was important to have ongoing engagement and it was equally important for all public sector services to engage in early engagement with Community Councils and Planning and developing such relationships. He was unable to answer the specific question that the Community Councillor had but he would refer the matter to the relevant department.

A Town Councillor made reference to the Public Services Board and area meetings being held in Bridgend and Cardiff as well as the Vale, and these being an opportunity to engage around the Plan with these bodies. The Head of Policy and Transformation said he would look at integrated services, for example Shared Audit Service, as a means of engaging the different stakeholders.

A Committee Member in referring to collaboration between the Vale of Glamorgan Council and Barry Town, suggested a consultation sub-committee be established. He also mentioned this would be very timely as the Town Council was currently updating their Corporate Plan and would look to tie in with the Vale on this. The Committee Member also asked to look at Reshaping Service opportunities from joint collaboration with the Vale Council.

Another Committee Member stated that he was surprised that the vast majority of respondents to the public opinion survey had agreed with the current objectives. The Committee Member went on to give examples around parking charges, house building and road building. The Member stated that the Vale of Glamorgan needed to listen more to Town and Community Councils, for example Town and Community Councils wanted development of infrastructure which had not happened. The Head of Policy and Business Transformation replied that there was a need to look at strategic areas in the community and the importance of the Annual Delivery Plan.

A Town Councillor in agreeing with the Committee Member's previous statement also stated that the 2016-2020 Plan had not referred to the planning applications, therefore planning decisions in their view were made in isolation from the Corporate

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Plan. The Head of Policy and Business Transformation responded that planning needed to refer to the Well-being Objectives in making their decisions, he also stated that there was a need to look at how regeneration worked across the Vale of Glamorgan and to develop this.

A Committee Member stated that the Plan needed to have “legal teeth” so that it would have more credibility in the eyes of Councillors and the general public. The Head of Policy and Business Transformation stated that there was new legislation coming through as the Wales Audit Office would be finishing a report in the autumn which looked at giving more legal teeth to such Plans.

Following the conclusion of the report, there being no further suggestions, members were reminded any further comments could be forwarded to the Democratic Services Officer or the Head of Policy and Business Transformation, it was subsequently

AGREED –

(1) T H A T the contents of the report and the timetable for the development of the Vale of Glamorgan Council’s new Corporate Plan be noted.

(2) T H A T if any member of the Community Liaison Committee had any further comments or suggestions they be forwarded to the Democratic Services Officer or the Head of Policy and Business Transformation.