Minutes

Liaison Meeting with Community Councils

Date: 21 September 2017

Time: 6.00 pm

Present: Councillors Bishton, Graig, Langstone, Penhow, Rogerstone and Wentlooge

Anne Jenkins (Democratic Services Support Officer) and Gareth Price (Head of Law & Regulation)

Together with the following representatives from Community Councils:

A Harris (Goldcliffe), R Caston, T Appleton, P Gregory, N Tarr & S Davies (Graig), J Wagstaff (Penhow), J Davies & A Whiting (Bishton), L Jones (Nash), B Miles (Wentlooge), H Jones (Langstone), S Mlewa (Rogerstone)

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1   **Apologies for Absence**

Councillor V Dudley (Rogerstone), J Foster (Wentlooge), S Jones (Rogerstone) and T Ducroq (Nash), A Whitfield (Graig), T Jefferies (Langstone), J Small (Goldcliff)

2   **Virgin Media**

G Gillanders, Virgin Media gave a presentation on Project Lightning, an investment plan to provide ultrafast internet by means of privately investing in the UK's digital network.

The presentation outlined the following:

- £3 Billion investment generating up to £8 billion of economic activity.
- Four Million extra premises connected between 2015 and 2019 with 6,000 jobs created; from engineers to apprentices.
- Process of works, what would happen during installation of the cable, reducing disruption and environmental impact.
- How to contact Virgin media, should there be any issues.

The presentation would be circulated to community council clerks for information.

Bishton Community Council asked whether Virgin Media would bring high speed broadband to rural areas. Rural areas were classed as areas within a mile of the network. Customers were however to contact Virgin Media to express the need for cable in rural areas and with a greater customer demand, the company would hopefully look into expansion.

3   **Items Raised by Community Councillors**

a) <u>Update on the Concurrent Expenditure(Graig CC)</u>
   The Chair advised those present that the Head of Finance provided an update from the Cabinet Member for Community & Resources who was giving the report careful

consideration. The Cabinet Member was also due to meet with the Cabinet Member for Assets & Member Development to discuss the Concurrent Expenditure.

The Bishton Community Councillor asked would the Head of Finance need any information from the Community Councils on their expenditure. The Chair agreed that this would be useful information to pass on to the Head of Finance and suggested that if any Community Councillors wanted to do this that they could send the information on to A Jenkins who would forward on to Finance.

Lengthy discussion ensued regarding fair allocation of monies as well as the option considered by Scrutiny to put forward to the Cabinet Member. The Chair reminded the Community Councillors that the recommended option was based on the concurrent services the Community Councils were spending their money.

The Wentlooge Community Councillor mentioned that smaller community councils usually carried out jobs on a voluntary basis and if this could be proven when applying for the concurrent expenditure. In response the Chair advised that under those arrangements, smaller community councils were being penalised for any work being carried out on a voluntary basis.

Furth discussion turned to the benefits of transferring services from areas of the council to community councils, such as grass cutting. Graig Community Council met with the Head of Streetscene and the Senior Strategy Manager and outlined a list of the concerns. The Graig Community Councillors found this very useful. The Chair was also working with the aforementioned officers on concurrent functions and what services could be taken over at a local level; on a consultancy type of service.

The Chair also highlighted that the council would also have their finance cut and that future grant funding could be considerably reduced.

Finally, the Chair advised that the Head of Finance would be invited to the meeting in December to discuss the Concurrent Expenditure.

b) Community Council Audits (Graig CC)
   Graig Community Council suggested the possibility of sharing an internal auditor to reduce the rising costs with other Community Councils.

   Price comparisons were made on the costs of an internal auditor and discussion ensued on the service provision of the internal auditors. In addition, the difference between internal audit and external audit. External auditing was carried out by Wales Audit Office (WAO) and focussed on governance, the public purse and the general running of the community council.

   Graig Community Council employed a chartered accountant, which proved to be extremely costly. It was however advised that it was not a legal requirement for the internal auditor to be a chartered accountant, although it might be considered good practice.

   Finally, the Chair advised those present that the Community Councils could circulate information by contacting Anne Jenkins.

c) Community Infrastructure Levy (Langstone CC)
   Langstone Community Council asked was there a process in place for Community Councils to apply for funding. In response to this, the Planning Contributions Manager had provided a response:

The Housing White Paper (2017) has concluded that CIL will be replaced by a more simple system. In addition, responsibility for the implementation of CIL has recently been devolved to the Welsh Government. As such, the Council has decided not to pursue CIL for the time being until further national guidance is provided. We will continue to seek planning contributions through the S106 process.

d) Penhow Community Council complained about the moss on pathways and was advised that this should be reported to Streetscene. There was a protocol for reporting slips and trips on the Newport City Council website.

A Whiting, Clerk to Bishton Community Council informed the Chair that it was his last meeting and that he was resigning his position as Clerk. Alan started as a Community Councillor in Llanwern in 1982.

The Chair wished him a long and happy retirement.

4   **Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting would take place on 7 December at 6pm in Committee Room 1.