

Minutes



Liaison Meeting with Community Councils

Date: 24 September 2015

Time: 6.00 pm

Present: G Price (Head of Law and Regulation) (in the Chair), M Rushworth (Head of Finance) and A Jenkins (Democratic Services Officer)

Together with the following representatives from Community Councils:

A Whiting (Bishton), R Caston, N Mountain, P Gregory & S Davies (Graig), J Williams (Marshfield), Councillor T Bond, S Bowen, V Dudley, A Gunn & J Toleman (Rogerstone), B Morgan (Penhow), G Hancock (Langstone), B Miles & J Foster (Wentlooge) E Williams (Llanvaches), T Brown & K Wilson (Llanwern)

1 Apologies for Absence

A Cox (Nash Community Council)

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting: 25 June 2015

The Minutes of the meeting held on 25 June 2015 were submitted.

Agreed:

The minutes of the meeting were recorded as a true record.

3 Concurrent Expenditure

The Chair introduced the matter and outlined the process for the Cabinet Member for People and Business Change to take a decision regarding the future allocation of concurrent expenditure, given that there was no general consensus among the community councils regarding any preferred option.

A representative from Rogerstone suggested that community councils bid for funding, which might result in a fairer distribution of the monies.

A representative of Rogerstone Community Council asked if clerks had been in receipt of a letter from the clerk to Rogerstone. The Chair sought clarification as he was aware that there were two letters sent over the recent months.

Those present were informed that a letter was sent to the Cabinet Member for People and Business Change and the Head of Finance by the Rogerstone Clerk, suggesting that they offer back £20,000 of their £64,500 concurrent funding, which was a reduction of over 31%. It was however suggested that it be reduced by £2,000 per annum over the next 10 years.

This letter was not circulated to the rest of the clerks as Rogerstone Community Council were awaiting a response from either Cabinet Member or Head of Finance. The Chair did however strongly advise all community councils not to send any letters to a Cabinet Member

but to himself so that there would be an official receipt of any future correspondence and to ensure that the Cabinet Member remained objective as the final decision-maker.

Lengthy debate and discussion ensued in response to the letter. The majority of Community Councillors felt that the proposal was not proportionate and that a 10 year reduction was not realistic with the current financial position of the Newport City Council. They also felt that the letter should have been shared with all community councils in advance of the meeting.

The Chair asked those present if they wanted to table the proposal by Rogerstone at the meeting as an alternative option.

The Head of Finance joined the meeting and went through the three original options with those present, which were based on i) tax ii) population and iii) precept, with the addition of Langstone Community Councils proposal at a previous meeting of giving everyone a minimum allocation of £2,000 and the balance of the allocation being apportioned according to council tax base.. A final option brought to the table by the head of Finance was to remove the concurrent allocation altogether due to the challenges that Newport City Council faced in reducing their budget for 2016/17 and future years.

The community councillors present each voiced their concern over the unfairness of the allocation of funds and felt that Rogerstone were receiving the lion's share of the concurrent expenditure. All the options were considered at great length and the community councillors reiterated their individual concerns, which had been raised over the previous years on numerous occasions.

The representative for Marshfield Community Council referred to the record of responses from each of the community councils in regard to the three options. Out of the 14, 12 community councils actually responded and option one was the most popular option with seven community councils favouring this choice.

Again, after a lot of discussion the Marshfield community council representative proposed that option one be recommended to the Cabinet Member as the majority choice by the community councillors. The Langstone community council representative seconded this proposal and it was supported by the Llanwern community council representative. The Langstone representative confirmed that their alternative proposal of a £2,000 minimum allocation had only be put forward as a compromise if option one was not accepted.

The Chair asked if everyone present was in agreement that the first option be presented in a report as one of the recommendations to the Cabinet Member.

Resolved:

That the majority of the community councillors present were in agreement that the first option of tax based allocation be presented to the Cabinet Member as their preferred option.

4 **Date of Next Meeting**

Thursday 10 December 2015 at 6pm in Committee Room 1.