

MINUTES OF A MULTI-LOCATION MEETING OF THE PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE OF PONTYPOOL COMMUNITY COUNCIL HELD ON WEDNESDAY 8TH MARCH 2023

In attendance:

Councillor: Jon James* (In the Chair)

and Councillors: Lyn Clarkson*, Anne Gunter*, Gaynor James*, Richard Overton* Nick Simons*, Nathan Warren*

Also in attendance: James Vale*, Katie Jenkins*, Officers at Torfaen County Borough Council.

Officers: Lisa McMail (Clerk)* Rebecca Cronin* (Projects & Events Manager), Jane Wright (Assistant Clerk)*

* *Attending remotely via Microsoft Teams due to adverse weather.*

The meeting was recorded for minute taking purposes as agreed by Members.

Min No	Subject and Decision	Action
346.	<u>Apologies for absence</u> Councillors Nick Byrne and Matt Ford gave apologies for absence.	
347.	<u>Declarations of Interest</u> Councillors Lyn Clarkson, Gaynor James, Jon James and Nick Simons declared personal and non-prejudicial interests in any agenda items relating to Torfaen County Borough Council (TCBC) as they were members of TCBC, as well as members of Pontypool Community Council.	JW
348.	<u>Waste Consultation/Digital First Draft Strategy and Consultation</u> Katie Jenkins (KJ) informed the meeting that although she was due to speak on the waste consultation this had been postponed until the 27 th March so James Vale (JV), Head of Customer, Digital and ICT services at Torfaen had attended to give a presentation on the Digital First Draft Strategy and	

	<p>Consultation. [Copy of presentation attached as an appendix to the minutes]</p> <p>The Chair thanked both JV and KJ for attending the meeting.</p> <p><u>RECOMMENDED:</u> that Mr James Vale be thanked for his presentation in relation to Digital First Draft Strategy and Consultation.</p>	
349.	<p><u>Biodiversity Working Group</u></p> <p>Cllr NW gave a verbal update on the Biodiversity Plan. He informed members that the main thing to update was that he and Mrs AA were supposed to be presenting the plan to staff in the office today but due to the office being closed because of adverse weather this would be-rearranged.</p> <p>Cllr AG referred to a seminar she attended given by Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water on the 16th February in relation to ‘Doing the Right Thing for Nature’ which outlines the steps taken by Welsh Water in its commitments for achieving its vision and mission set out in its biodiversity strategy. It aims to maintain and enhance biodiversity within the fulfilment of its functions for the wellbeing of current and future generations.</p> <p>Cllr AG gave a summary of the seminar: The Seminar was extremely interesting and was presented by Gemma Williams, the Ecology Advisor, who had stated that Welsh Water were refreshing their business plans for 2025 – 2030. A draft plan was being drawn up by Spring 2023 which would then go out for customer consultation, where they would be looking at more nature based solutions; less concrete, creating more reed beds, wetland areas to capture more carbon, they are looking at the Agriculture Act at the Senedd to interact with Welsh Water and the Farming Community, and they would be setting targets for 2030, 2040 and 2050. All of the report would affect us but the one she felt that needed to have more time spent on it was “Making time for nature 2020”</p> <p>The report was brought out in 2020 and was due to be refreshed by December 2023. The original report included 30 commitments from its Biodiversity “Making Time for Nature 2020” plan with their aim to support and deliver biodiversity with their objectives being as follows:</p>	

1. Restore and measure habitats and look after the protected sites in its ownership – woodlands, peatlands and rivers
2. Work in partnership with Welsh Water regulators and stakeholders and promote research opportunities.
3. Improve the management of non-native species - Himalayan balsam and Japanese knotweed.
4. Develop and engage our colleagues as ambassadors and work better to understand customers' expectations.
5. Maintain and enhance biodiversity.

Since 2020 and out of the 30 commitments made, 21 have been completed, 9 are ongoing and on track, there were no non-starters, and none were behind schedule or none were too difficult to complete, there were emerging themes for reporting including the pandemic, the 2021 Biodiversity prices was declared, COP 26 Climate Change in Glasgow and the Cop 15 Biodiversity in Montreal, they also had good positive engagement projects including water sourcing November 2020, Brecon Beacons Mega project 2050 vision which is going to be an All Team Wales approach so everyone is encouraged to visit Waste Water works which hold community days across Wales and they highly recommend a visit.

There are 12 biodiversity champions in post, possibly 14 in the near future. In relation to Research and Innovation division Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water have created a wetlands centre in Llanelli, closer to home there are zebra mussels blocking up the pipes at Llandegfedd Reservoir so they have to be very careful as this is a drinking water catchment area so their management has to be very carefully managed. Signages have been upgraded and they are producing educational booklets.

In relation to partnership working – bluebell seeds have been collected which are stored at the National Botanical Garden in Wales, some of these have now been scattered and planted at Llannon Reservoir just outside Llanelli where they would be checking for an increase or decrease in pollinators but as yet no data has been received, they are also looking at dry stone walling and creating more SSI areas.

Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water are able to award community group biodiversity enhancements, and they have got blocks of funding for this ranging from £250.00 to £1000. In

	<p>2021/2022 £14,000 was awarded to local community projects.</p> <p>Moving forward they are continuing to refresh the biodiversity plan, workshops will become available between April and May 2023 and they are aligning their working with NRW and the Welsh Government.</p> <p>The Clerk confirmed that she had circulated and shared the information previously sent by Cllr AG to her to all members.</p> <p>RECOMMENDED: that the information relayed by Cllr AG be received and noted and Cllr AG be thanked for the summary in relation to 'Doing the Right Things for Nature'.</p>	
350.	<p><u>Planning Applications</u></p> <p>Members received and considered the list of planning applications on which it was being consulted by Torfaen County Borough Council (TCBC).</p> <p>RECOMMENDED: that the observations (or absence of observations as the case may be) as outlined in the appendix to these minutes be submitted to Torfaen County Borough Council</p> <p>[Footnote: Planning comments that were made in relation to planning application 22/P/0356 withdrawn as residents had already submitted comments.</p>	CP
351.	<p><u>Planning Determinations</u></p> <p>Members received and noted Torfaen County Borough Council planning determinations including reasons for approvals or refusals.</p> <p>RESOLVED: that the planning determinations as outlined be noted.</p>	CP
352.	<p><u>Planning Applications: Plenary Powers</u></p> <p>Members received the list of observations made on planning applications between meetings, under plenary powers.</p> <p>RESOLVED: that the observations as outlined be noted</p>	

353.	<p><u>Committee Budget</u></p> <p>The Committee received the budget (and reserves) within its remit and the spend to date.</p> <p><u>RECOMMENDED:</u> that the information be received and the spend to date be noted.</p>	
354.	<p><u>Notice Boards</u></p> <p>The Committee received a verbal update by the Projects & Events Manager in relation to Community Council notice boards. The Chair stated that he had visited all the notice boards in the Pontypool ward and had found that a few notice boards had out of date information in them from 2017 which did not look good for the Community Council, he had removed them, and it was agreed that a conscious effort be made to ensure that all notice boards are kept up to date.</p> <p>RC gave an update in relation to notice boards asking Cllr AG for clarification in relation to the resiting and positioning of notice boards in Griffithsown/Sebastopol. It was agreed that RC would follow up with Cllr AG after the meeting and a further update in relation to notice boards be given at the next meeting.</p> <p><u>RECOMMENDED:</u> that the information in relation to notice boards be received and noted, with an update being given at the next meeting.</p>	
355.	<p><u>Litter/Doggy Bins</u></p> <p>To receive a verbal update on Litter/Doggy Bins from the Projects & Events Manager and any matters arising from a survey conducted by Councillor Jon James.</p> <p>RC informed the meeting that Sian Watkins (SW) had stated that the capacity of bins installed is almost at maximum and future bin locations need to be scrutinized to determine whether they are actually necessary or for the Council to work on a replacement programme, with the Council considering larger capacity litter/doggy bins in future as well as a new design. RC explained that SW had trialled bigger recycling bins for doggy/litter waste in Cwmbran but unfortunately these bins were being used by people to dispose of household waste which meant that all this waste then went to landfill instead of being recycled.</p>	

	<p>RC stated that SW had produced a list of all doggy/litter bins owned by PCC, which would be presented to the next meeting. RC informed members that she had set up going forward an ongoing maintenance plan of which SW thought this was an excellent idea, members agreed.</p> <p>Cllr NW stated that the issue of doggy/litter bins is a much wide spread problem than an isolated one, referring to the lack of doggy bins that the Headteacher of Cwmffrwdoer had referred to in the e-mail that had been presented at the November P & E meeting, and said that a map of the area where all doggy/litter bins are sited throughout the Pontypool area would be helpful. He also referred to the fact that the Council need to ensure that bins are distributed in the right places so if they are no longer fit for purpose they can actually site a bin where it is needed rather than putting it back in the same place if there are already numerous bins in that area. Cllr LC referred to the waste strategy consultation that would be presented to Council shortly.</p> <p>RECOMMENDED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) that the list of bins that PCC own produced by SW be presented to the next meeting. (ii) that PCC look to improve/replace existing bins rather than install any new ones including a maintenance programme in line with budget restrictions. 	
356.	<p><u>Playground Equipment</u></p> <p>A lengthy discussion took place on playground equipment in relation to enquiries received relating to replacement of Park Fencing at Varteg. Concern was expressed at the cost as there was only £16,000 in the budget of which this would take a considerable amount and in addition members pointed out that other play areas throughout Torfaen needed play equipment/fencing replacing which the Council would be unable to accommodate within its budget. The Clerk referred to an e-mail from Ms Henrietta Lucas at Torfaen County Borough Council which she had received and shared with the Chair informing her that TCBC would be willing to work with PCC in relation to the amount of money they had in relation to play equipment, a member pointed out that in relation to the maintenance of play areas this had always been the responsibility of Torfaen not PCC.</p> <p>RECOMMENDED: that the information in relation to play</p>	

	equipment be noted and that more information be given at the next meeting after the Clerk had discussed it further with Mrs H. Lucas at Torfaen.	
--	--	--

Signed by Chair