

MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT COMMITTEE OF ABERTILLERY AND LLANHILLETH COMMUNITY COUNCIL HELD ON 14 JULY 2023 AT 6.00 PM at the Council Offices, Mitre Street, Abertillery and via video conferencing (Zoom).

PRESENT

Councillors: Barrie Page (Chair) Tracey Dyson, Ben Owen-Jones, Josh Rawcliffe

Officers: David Cartwright (Clerk)

PRESENT VIA VIDEOLINK

Councillors: Peter Adamson

Apologies: Deb Pitt

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Deb Pitt. Josh Rawcliffe had given notice that he would arrive late.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST OR DISPENSATIONS

None.

3. MINUTES – 24 APRIL 2023

The Committee **RESOLVED** that the minutes were a true and correct record.

4. ADULT ENGAGEMENT

The Committee **RESOLVED** that the following should be recommended to Full Council as the terms of reference for the Committee's Adult Engagement responsibilities:

- To understand the causes of social isolation in the Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council area.
- To take a lead role – in cooperation with officers and other Council committees – in developing this Council's strategies to combat social disenfranchisement and marginalisation.
- To make recommendations regarding Council strategies to ensure that no one in the Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council area is excluded from being able to play a full role in helping to build cohesive communities.
- To identify – and collate information on – community groups and organisations that have connections with adults aged 18-and-over at risk of being marginalised within society.
- To identify and develop ways in which this Council can help to maintain and strengthen the work of such community groups and organisations.
- To reinforce this Council's work to liaise between such groups, helping them to network and to build links and connections that strengthen the voice of marginalised people aged 18-and-over in the decision-making processes of this Council and other public bodies.

Josh Rawcliffe joined the meeting at 6.14 pm.

5. COMMUNICATIONS WORKING GROUP

- a) Ben Owen-Jones proposed that the terms of reference for the Communications working group should include reference to the draft Welsh language and British Sign Language policies that he and the Clerk had prepared in 2022.

The Committee **RESOLVED** that the following should be the terms of reference of its Communications working group:

- To identify the key messages and information that this Council needs to communicate and to whom, and to report these to the Community Empower Committee.
- To identify the key messages and information that this Council needs to receive from those audiences and how they want to communicate with this Council, and to report these to the Community Empower Committee.
- To understand the legislative imperatives imposed on the Council and the practical constraints on officers vis-à-vis communications.
- To identify the most practicable and effective methods of two-way communication between this Council and its audiences, and to report these to the Community Empower Committee. These may include:

traditional media;

in-person communication;

a range of social media;

this Council's website;

paid-for marketing and communications.

- To develop and deliver strategies and policies to ensure effective, proactive two-way communication between this Council and its audiences, and to agree these with the Community Empower Committee.
- To bring to the Committee for recommendation to Full Council draft Welsh language and British Sign Language policies.

- b) The Committee **RESOLVED** to appoint Ben Owen-Jones, Barrie Page and Josh Rawcliffe to the Communications working group.

Ben Owen-Jones suggested that former community councillor Tom Langley-Noel should be approached to become a co-opted member of the working group.

6. YOUTH ENGAGEMENT – ABERTILLERY

- a) Tracey Dyson reported that she had spoken at length with Kristian Gay from the Blaenau Gwent Youth Team. Abertillery Youth Centre would remain open twice-a-week over the summer months. A recent presentation on drug and alcohol issues had been very well attended by a fully-engaged audience of young people. The team had undertaken a survey of young people which had helped to highlight changes that would attract more young people in the target group to attend sessions at the centre.

The Blaenau Gwent Youth Team had been working with Luke Davies of Gwent Police to formulate a diversion scheme for some young people identified as most at risk of entering the criminal justice system. The scheme proposes enabling identified individuals to attend classes with Abertillery-based professional mixed martial artist Jack Shore. Attendance would be compulsory and the classes would be dependent on the individuals staying free of drugs, alcohol and offending. In return, the costs of the

classes (£43 per month) would be met by the scheme. The Blaenau Gwent Youth Team had asked Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council to fund the program.

The Committee **RESOLVED** to recommend to Full Council that a budget of £5,000 – to be managed by the Community Empowerment Committee – be allocated to fund a Blaenau Gwent Youth Team diversion scheme for young people identified as most at risk of entering the criminal justice system.

- b) Tracey Dyson reported that she had spoken to representatives of the newly-formed Abertillery Aspiration Group. The group had proposed an initiative regarding the abandoned Lo-Cost store site adjacent to Castle Street in Abertillery. The site was currently derelict pending development for the proposed Abertillery railway station. As the planned rail link to Abertillery had yet to receive UK Government funding, the site was likely to remain derelict for a number of years. The project envisaged cleaning up the site and creating a 'safe area' for the town's young people. The project would require significant on-going funding to provide shelters, lighting and other infrastructure. The proposed scheme had been endorsed by the Blaenau Gwent Youth Team.

The Committee **RESOLVED** to recommend to Full Council that it agrees in principle to support the initiative and that it authorises the Community Empowerment Committee to enter into relevant discussions on its behalf with the Abertillery Aspiration Group, Blaenau Gwent Youth Team, the landowner and others.