

Budgets and expenditure

Summer events

The People and Communities Committee has been given delegated authority and responsibility for two summer initiatives; Party in the Park and the planned Community Summer Cinema Events. These events require venues, equipment, entertainment, transport etc to be pre-booked, which means that deposits fees may need to be paid months in advance. In some cases, this expenditure may need to take place in the financial year 2022-23. A number of issues arise.

The Committee cannot authorise payments to be made before 1 April 2023 from its 2023-24 budget.

However, the Committee is forecast to underspend its 2022-23 budget. In particular, the Committee had more than £10,000 in its 2022-23 budget to cover planned expenditure on drive-in cinema events that did not take place. So, the Committee has unspent money available that could be used to pay for expenditure in 2022-23 in respect of events that will not take place until the financial year 2023-24.

The Committee cannot make this decision. It needs to ask Full Council for authority to 'vire' (i.e., transfer) some of this unspent money from one budget line to another. The Committee secured authority in September 2022 to do this in respect of the 2023 Party in the Park. The Clerk has advised the Committee to request similar authority in respect of the planned Community Summer Cinema Events as well.

At its meeting on 9 February 2023, the Committee gave formal undertakings that the total expenditure on Party in the Park and on the Community Summer Cinema Events will not exceed the budgets agreed by Full Council for the financial year 2023-24 "regardless of the financial year in which elements of expenditure take place." In other words, the Committee has given undertakings that it will not misuse the virement process to sneakily increase either initiative's total budget.

St David's Day concert

In September 2022, the People and Communities Committee reported that St Michael's Church in Abertillery, which had traditionally hosted the Council's annual carol concert free of charge, was currently unable to stage the event. A suitable alternative venue was found in the shape of The Met but a hire fee was required. Full Council resolved to authorise the virement (i.e., transfer) of £500 from the People and Communities Committee's 2022-23 Outdoor Cinema Event budget to its Musical Concerts budget.

The same situation regarding the venue now applies to the 2023 St David's Day concert. The Committee has £441.50 of unallocated funds remaining in its 2022-23 Musical Concerts budget, but The Clerk has advised the Committee to request Full Council to authorise virement of a further £500 to ensure that all costs for the 2023 St David's Day concert may be comfortably met.

Local Development Plan

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council has begun to re-consult on its Local Development Plan, the publication of which was delayed by the Covid-19 pandemic. It is a duty of a community council to participate in the preparation of the Local Development Plan. As it is among the terms of reference of the PlaCE Committee to "respond to public planning

consultations, statutory structural and local plans,” it is recommended that responsibility for this Council’s engagement in the consultation process for the Local Development Plan is formally delegated to that committee.

Committees

The Council has nine current vacancies on its committees. The terms of reference of the relevant committees are shown in Appendix 2.

Co-option

A vacancy for a Member for the Cwmtillery ward was left unfilled following the Council’s co-option process in Autumn 2022. It was agreed that Full Council would consider in the New Year whether to seek to fill this vacancy.

As long as the Council has sufficient Members to remain quorate during Council meetings, there is no legal requirement to seek to fill any ordinary vacancy. However, the Community Council has been allotted 19 councillors because that is the number deemed necessary by Blaenau Gwent Council under the Local Government Act to carry on the business of the Council and to fully represent the interests of the local community.

The process of seeking to fill vacancies is covered by law but the Council has an additional policy that has regards to best practice on advertising for, and selecting, candidates. Should the Council seek to fill the vacancy in Cwmtillery, it should also consider whether it wants to make any amendments to the co-option policy and procedure as shown in Appendix 3.

Banking hub

LINK is the industry body that connects the UK’s high street banks, building societies and other debit and ATM card issuers.

Where – as in the Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council area – there is no remaining bank or building society branch, LINK has given an undertaking to carry out a review of the community’s banking needs if they are requested to do so by members of the public, elected officials or community groups.

Such a review would consider whether there is a need for cash access and deposit services in the Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council area to be provided face-to-face. If so, this would be the first step on the road to the possible provision of a banking hub in the area.

Council Grants

The application from Six Bells Community Centre is for a Council Grant of £500 towards total project costs of £4137. Were the application to be successful, Six Bells Community Centre would still be more an £1,000 short of the total required for the project to go ahead.

It should be noted that the application from Bournville Social Institute is for funding for a purchase that has already taken place. If the application was successful, the Council Grant would not be used to pay for the installation of a new boiler (which has already been fitted) but would, in effect, be a payment of £300 into the organisation’s funds for an unspecified purpose.