

Funding of youth services

To all, intents and purposes, there are no services that a community council must provide. It is up to Members of the Council to decide how much, or how little, a community council does.

In contrast, there are a large number of services that the local authority – in our case, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council – must provide by law. In normal circumstances, a community council is not allowed to fund and run the services that the borough council has a statutory duty to provide.

These statutory duties include: education services; children's safeguarding and social care; adult social care; waste collection; planning and housing services; road maintenance; and library services.

However, in a number of instances, the law states that a local authority only has a statutory duty to provide 'sufficient' services – and the law leaves it to the local authority to define what is 'sufficient' in their area.

Traditionally, many local authorities provided a level of services that was much higher than this level. However, in the last ten years, many local authorities have cut their services back much closer to the minimum 'sufficient' level.

A community council is allowed to step in to fund services that, traditionally, have been provided by their local authority as long as the services paid for by the community council are outside of the minimum 'sufficient' services that the local authority has a statutory duty to provide.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council has decided that detached youth work is not among the minimum 'sufficient' services that it must provide.

The law (Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972) specifically allows a community council to fund their borough council to provide these non-statutory services.

Detached youth team proposals

Since July 2019, this Council has funded the work of two detached youth work teams. Off The Streets – an independent, non-profit making organisation – provides a team operating in the south of the community council area. The Blaenau Gwent Youth Service – part of Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council – provides a team operating in the north of the area (including Abertillery).

Last October, both teams submitted proposals to the Council for the funding of their work in 2023-24. The proposals were considered in detail by the Council as part of its budget-setting process in January.

Off The Streets proposed the funding of three part-time youth workers. Together with other costs (e.g., venue hire etc) the total amount of funding proposed was £44,244. The Council allocated this sum in its budget for 2023-24.

The Blaenau Gwent Youth Service made two proposals: one for the continued funding of three part-time youth workers (£41,500) and one for the increased provision of one full-time youth worker plus two part-time youth workers (£54,500). The increase in staffing levels had been agreed by this Council in 2021 but had not taken place because of Covid-19 restrictions. The Council's Community Empowerment Committee recommended that the Council fund this increased provision in 2023-24 and this Council allocated £54,500 in its budget.

Since the Blaenau Gwent Youth Service submitted their proposals, local government staff have received two pay settlements that have raised salary scales. Earlier this month, the Blaenau

Gwent Youth Service submitted revised costings for their proposals of £48,580 ('standstill' provision of three part-time staff) and £65,614 (increased provision).

The second of these proposals is £11,114 more than the amount allocated in this Council's budget for 2023-24.

The Council holds more than £117,000 in its reserve account to enable it to accommodate expenditure that was unexpected and unplanned for when it set its budget for 2023-24. Therefore, the Council will still be able to comfortably afford to fund the revised costs of the proposed increased provision should it decide to do so.

Community Empowerment Committee

The Council will be invited to appoint a Member to fill the existing vacancy on the Committee, the terms of reference for which are shown below. Members may nominate themselves for the position.

Community Empowerment Committee

Members: Barrie Page (Chair), Ben Owen-Jones, Josh Rawcliffe, Tracey Dyson (1 vacancy).

The Committee will manage a budget of more than £100,000 in 2023-24.

Its main duties are to:

- Measure and review the effectiveness, value-for-money and performance of Community Council-funded youth work.
- To liaise with external agencies to formulate proposals for future youth engagement initiatives.
- To formulate terms of reference for the Council's wider community empowerment work.

Ward Grant

Members may each propose grant-funding of up to £200 annually for organisations based within – or that have an impact on the communities within – their wards. Traditionally, Ward Grants have been authorised by Full Council on the recommendation of the Member without debate.

Council vacancies

The Council has two vacancies for councillors in the Cwmtillery ward. One is an 'ordinary vacancy' (created because insufficient candidates stood in last May's elections) and one is a 'casual vacancy' (created because a Member resigned from the Council). The rules governing the filling of 'ordinary' vacancies are different from those for 'casual' vacancies.

The Council meeting of 22 February 2023 resolved to advertise for candidates to be co-opted to the ordinary vacancy in the Cwmtillery ward. The deadline for the receipt of applications is 30 March 2023.

The Council resolved to defer consideration of the casual vacancy created in the Cwmtillery ward to a future meeting. However, legislation dictates that a community council must give public notice of a casual vacancy "as soon as practicable after the date on which the vacancy has occurred." The public notice has therefore been posted. If no election is called by local electors by the deadline of 30 March, the Council must advertise for candidates to be co-opted to the casual vacancy "as soon as practicable" thereafter.

The Council will advertise the ordinary vacancy in Cwmtillery until 30 March 2023 and then, if no election is called, advertise the casual vacancy in the same ward from 31 March 2023 to 20 April 2023.