

# TREDEGAR TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Council held remotely via Microsoft Teams  
on Wednesday, 20<sup>th</sup> January, 2021 at 6.00 p.m.

**Present:** Councillors E. Jones (Chair)

D. Jones  
A.E. Tippings  
M. Cross  
D.W.A. Howells  
G. James  
K. Phillips  
S. Rees  
D. Rowberry  
J. Thomas  
H. Trollope  
S. Trollope  
G. Walters  
B. Willis

**In attendance:** Clerk – Ms. C. Price  
RFO – Ms. A. Edwards

**By invitation:** *Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council:*  
Corporate Director of Education, Lynn Phillips  
Transformation Team Manager, Claire Gardener  
Transformation Team, Sharon Northall  
Business Support, Kerrie Young

**166) Apologies.** Councillors T. Smith, A. Jones, P. Prosser and M. Turner

## **167) Declarations of Interest**

The Chair reminded Members to make their declarations as and when necessary.

## **168) Consultation Document Proposal for a Welsh-medium Primary School in Tredegar / Sirhowy Valley : BGCBC Officers to present**

The Chair welcomed Officers of the Local Authority to the meeting, who were in attendance to present the Consultation Document Proposal for a Welsh-medium Primary School in Tredegar / Sirhowy Valley and respond to questions raised accordingly.

The Corporate Director of Education thereupon presented the Consultation Document, with the aid of visual slides, outlining the following:

- Consultation Proposal: to establish a Welsh-medium Primary School via a seedling /

- growth model
- Formal consultation period 17<sup>th</sup> December, 2020 – 29<sup>th</sup> January, 2021
  - Background and context of the Proposal
  - Options
    1. Maintain Status Quo
    2. Co-location of Welsh-medium seedling school in existing English-medium school with internal surplus capacity to accommodate a seedling and / or school build
    3. Co-location of Welsh-medium seedling school in existing English-medium school with enough external capacity to accommodate a seedling and school build
    4. Secure new site for a 210-place Welsh-medium Primary School and establish both childcare and seedling provision via a growth model
  - Site options: Chartist Way, Deighton ground, Stockton Way, Tredegar Business Park, playing fields at Tredegar Comprehensive School (most suitable site, dependent on investigation, determined as Chartist Way)
  - BGCBC proposed to develop a new 210-place Welsh-medium Primary School, with co-located childcare provision, to come into effect September 2023 and to be fully established by 2029
  - Financial implications: £6m secured, capital for school development; revenue implications estimated to be circa £350,000 on full operation (dependent on pupil population); likely impact on Home to School Transport (costs to be quantified if proposal approved)
  - Timeline – subject to approval
    - Business Case submitted to Welsh Government and approved
    - Formal Consultation Autumn 2020 / Spring 2021
    - Site investigation Spring 2021
    - Tender document preparation and detailed design Spring 2021
    - Pre-planning Consultation Spring 2021
    - Planning Spring 2021
    - Tender outcome Autumn 2021
    - Contractor appointment Spring 2022
    - Commence Spring / Summer 2022 (fourteen-month contract)
    - Conclusion Summer 2023 with occupation September 2023

The Corporate Director thereupon invited the observations of Council and the Officers responded to questions raised:

- Type of materials for exterior – that level of detail had not been agreed in respect of design, however the planning requirements would ensure the design would be sympathetic with existing area, e.g. natural woods, and not be intrusive, using robust materials that could cope with weather experienced in Blaenau Gwent. The Corporate Director was sure that the Technical Services Section would consider such matters at the next stage of the project.
- A Member highlighted major reservations as there was a range of efficient / effective primary schools in Tredegar and he was concerned of the effect of such a development. He enquired if Headteachers had been consulted and who would be responsible for redundancies, as it would not be possible for English-medium members of staff to transfer to the new School. Also it should be made clear to parents when views were shared to ensure parents realised that the number of teachers in existing Schools would decrease.

Headteachers had been consulted and a level of assurance sought from the Local Authority on the impact on the English-medium sector. The Corporate Director said that the Local Authority had no intention of undertaking school re-organisation in the English sector and the numbers were sustainable. A growth model would be manageable, with possibly ten / twelve learners per year and minimal impact, as the catchment area for the new School was in an area with a significant level of potential housing development, subsequently with an increased amount of learners in Blaenau Gwent.

In respect of redundancy costs, it was usual for schools to have redundancy arrangements in place based on pupil population and the Local Authority would work with schools in the sharing of premature retirement costs. He reiterated that it would be a number of years before the new School was fully operational and the Local Authority would work with Headteachers in the Tredegar area to minimise impact on existing provision.

- Concerns were also raised in respect of the proposed sites and Members enquired if other sites had been considered, e.g. the Ebbw Vale Learning Campus, where such provision was already in place, land adj. the bowls centre or the former Glyncoed Primary School site. The Corporate Director responded, briefly outlining any plans proposed in respect of each site.

The preferred site had been determined following the analysis of results of a demand survey, predominantly due to one factor – the amount of travelling time, as this was a barrier highlighted by parents when considering a sector to educate their children. The Transformation Team Manager managed school places throughout the Greater Gwent area and demand surveys tended to have a relatively small number of responses; however, the Officer said that extensive engagement and research had been undertaken with parents in Tredegar / Sirhowy and the Ebbw Fawr valley, with analysis indicating issues in respect of transport and accessing public transport, which parents considered a barrier to their children not having the benefit of the bilingual option. The demand surveys had therefore indicated a latent demand had developed in the Ebbw Fawr valley on analysis of figures; also, the Local Authority had a duty to look at the growth of Welsh-medium education as part of the National agenda to tackle provision and use of the Welsh language.

- Welsh Language Strategy – a Member enquired if Headteachers had perceived a gap in Welsh provision in Blaenau Gwent or whether the project was driven by the national target for Welsh speakers by 2050. The Corporate Director said demand was based on the results of the demand survey undertaken, with primary consideration around the impact on the English-medium sector, and assurances given this would be minimal / manageable.

It was noted, however, that the survey did not reflect much of a desire for Welsh education, as there had been only responses received from 5% of parents. Sirhowy Infants School had already been lost and Members said the siting of new School would have a massive impact on Glanhwy Primary; therefore, serious clarification was needed on the data / numbers. Officers said the current trend in Blaenau Gwent indicated that the pupil population was relatively stable and the County Borough was seeing an inward migration from other areas, e.g. Newport. Pupils would be resident in both valleys – Tredegar / Sirhowy and Ebbw Fawr.

Councillor S. Rees joined the meeting at this juncture (6.62 p.m.)

- In response to a question regarding capacity / surplus places in Bro Helyg Primary School, the Corporate Director said the School had circa of 240 learners and capacity

was not showing a significant level of surplus places and demand was increasing. The majority was currently learners from the Ebbw Fawr valley and distance / travelling time was a key issue. The Transformation Team Manager added there was not significant surplus capacity and through engagement with the Welsh-medium forum, which had now evolved to focus on promotion of the Welsh language, there was evidence of a latent demand across the community and, within the early years' sector, childcare provision was an area of focus in Tredegar.

A Member representing the Town Council as a newly appointed School Governor for Bro Helyg understood parents' concerns in respect of travel time, which impacted on taking up the opportunity for children to learn in a Welsh-medium setting.

- Budget / School funding – concern was raised in respect of the £350,000 to operate the new School and assurances were needed this would not impact on the budget of existing Primary Schools in Tredegar. The Corporate Director said the estimated £350,000 would be included as a future growth item considered within the Medium-term Financial Strategy of the Local Authority, rather than levied against existing budgets.

A Member expressed concern in respect of the proposed development being undertaken in Tredegar, particularly with a view to appease Welsh Government requirements; there was very little green space left in the Sirhowy area and the Ward had already lost the children's play area. There was a lot of anti-social behaviour in that locality and currently no provision for children to occupy themselves. Parking had always proven a problem, as this was a very busy area, and he would guarantee that the parents would park along the road which would result in associated problems with complaints. The Member also highlighted that recruiting of staff had always been a challenge in respect of the Welsh language to encourage suitable people into the area and had proven a struggle.

The Corporate Director said that highways matters and traffic management would form a key part of the planning process and mitigation against issues would be considered. It had proven challenging to engage Welsh-medium teachers, both in the primary sector and particularly in respect of specialist subjects, however as this was a growth model, there would be a period of time to grow the number of teachers in readiness for the new School by September 2023.

The Transformation Team Manager said that, as part of the Strategic Plan, the Local Authority was working closely with the Education Achievement Service (EAS) to look at the Welsh language, e.g. one-year sabbatical for new staff engaging with the Welsh language to develop a plan to support growth, as part of their personal development. There would be no increased costs in relation to the training of such staff as this would form part of the professional development with a targeted piece of work, depending on the individual seeking / securing Welsh-medium levels.

Councillor H. Trollope declared an interest, and would take no part in the any decision-making or voting process thereon, but wanted to ask a question in respect of a stated reduced capacity at the Welsh School based in Blaina, whether capacity had been reduced. Also, if pupils were entitled to apply for travel on a free bus, this could impact on numbers for Deighton Primary School, where pupils in the Cefn Golau area currently walked to school. The Transformation Team Manager highlighted that pupils would not necessarily be provided with free transport and the Local Authority would not support a change in School based on the parents' preference.

The Corporate Director said that a similar question had been posed on presenting the Consultation Document to a Scrutiny Committee; the Local Authority would look to parents to make an informed decision based on the preference for Welsh-medium learning rather than English-medium and would not like to think that parents would make the choice based on the availability of free transport. However, the Local Authority would not wish to destabilise any of their primary schools and would want to prevent such an impact at all cost.

In respect of reduced capacity at the Welsh-medium school, the Transformation Team Manager said that a report to Scrutiny had outlined two annual pupil projections; in 2018/19, capacity had reduced to 258 from 320, however going forward, there was an anticipation there could be insufficient places and a need to increase capacity based on a reconfiguration of pupil numbers as at September 2020.

The Chair extended the thanks of Council to the Officers for attending and providing this information, which was greatly appreciated; Members were encouraged to respond to the Consultation exercise included in the document circulated.

The Local Authority Officers thereupon left the meeting at this juncture.

### **169) To receive verbal recommendations of all Sub-Committees / Working Party held prior to this meeting**

It was agreed that the following recommendations presented to Council be approved accordingly:

#### ***Performance Review Sub-Committee – 20<sup>th</sup> January, 2021***

- Standstill precept 2021 / 2022: Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council to be notified prior to deadline of 31<sup>st</sup> January, 2021
- Budget Against Actual at 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2020: approved virements suggested between Total Wage Cost and Cultural & Sporting grants / s.137
- RFO to send all relevant 2021 / 2022 budget / precept information to Internal Auditor
- Proceed with completion of employee contract.

### **170) To consider a Schedule of Accounts for payment in January 2021**

The RFO referred to the report and said that bank reconciliations were available in the office for Members to view. The Officer outlined the reasons for the revised figures for December, i.e. cheques for school prizes removed and placed in to January, for information; and confirmed receipt of invoices for E.On and Ace, both received and listed on monthly schedule.

The Officer clarified, in respect of the January payments, normally three cheques were issued to individuals of Tredegar Comprehensive; however, for this financial year, only one had been needed to the School for reimbursement of costs.

A Member referred to the website cost, as this was a substantial payment each month, asking when this had last been reviewed, as perhaps when looking for savings, Council should liaise with the provider to ascertain if that amount was fair – previously based on provider resizing images and site infrastructure work. This requirement may have reduced, therefore perhaps Council should look at it and further development of the Town Council's website.

The RFO said that she had previously recommended meeting with the provider to look at the website. The provider managed the website and rectified any issues, e.g. the website had been inundated with spam emails prior to Christmas and the website had been down for some time in order to resolve the problem. Also, in line with new Legislation, there was a need for websites to be compliant and this would be an ideal opportunity to meet to see how Council could be advised. It was therefore agreed that a Publicity Sub-Committee be convened to discuss.

The update in respect of December figures was noted and the total for January was thereupon agreed; there being no further queries regarding the Schedule of Accounts, all presented items along with the corresponding bank transfer were approved for payment. The RFO asked that the four signatories liaise in respect of signing of the cheques for payment and the Transfer of funds to be undertaken in the presence of the appropriate Member and Town Clerk, which was noted accordingly.

### **171) To receive and adopt the following Minutes of Council:**

- a) Civic Meeting of Council – 2<sup>nd</sup> December, 2020:** Clerk provided feedback on issues relating to the town centre traffic lights; asked to pursue again and issues still experienced.
- b) Budget Working Group – 14<sup>th</sup> December, 2020**
- c) Ordinary Meeting of Council – 16<sup>th</sup> December, 2020:** amend Cefn Golau ‘Together’ and Waundeg ‘Flats’ to ‘Tenants and Residents’; and reference to the new ‘Hospital’ development be amended to Wellbeing Centre.

It was agreed that, for points of accuracy only, all Minutes presented be moved en bloc as a true record, subject to the foregoing amendments.

### **172) Chair to sign Minutes - at earliest opportunity in accordance with WG Legislation and Guidance**

To be duly signed by the Chair, adhering to safety regulations and relevant restrictions, at the earliest opportunity – Chair to liaise accordingly.

### **173) Correspondence**

*Councillor B. Willis declared an interest in the following item and took no part in discussion or voting thereon.*

1) BGCBC List of Licensing Applications, week ending 15.01.2021.

- Noted.

2) G. Adams Construction Response to Council’s queries.

- It was agreed that Members, as previously agreed, meet with the Contractor. The Clerk said that a further email had been received from G. Adams Construction following closing of Correspondence and, at the request of Council, outlined the content for information. Members

were aware there was a snag list on works outstanding to 10 The Circle.

- 3) M S Group S. Morgan; Confirming first Memorial maintenance visit is 16.01.2021.
- Noted; the Clerk confirmed the visit had been undertaken.
- 4) RFCA Expression of Interest now open for Silver Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) Awards.
- Forward to Armed Forces representative, Councillor M. Turner.
- 5) Aneurin Bevan University Health Board Telephonists at each of the main hospital sites who will serve as a point of contact for callers enquiring for updates on relatives; poster of new contact numbers - **added to website and Twitter**.
- Forward to all Members.

## 6) PUBLICATIONS

GAVO and IWN Connect 5 training aimed at frontline staff and volunteers who have face to face conversations with members of the public and would like to build knowledge and skills to have effective conversations in relation to mental health. Dates of forthcoming training sessions.

– **distributed to Members**: Received.

## 7) AGENDA

None received.

*Councillor B. Willis declared an interest in the following item and took no part in discussion or voting thereon.*

### 174) Planning:

- a) i) **To consider an Officer's Report (if received)** - None received.
- ii) List of planning applications received in week 01
- b) **Verbal report of the Planning Committee, if any**
- c) **To consider Planning Applications submitted for Council's observations**

<b>App. No.</b>	<b>Applicant</b>	<b>Proposal</b>
C/2020/0274	Mrs. K. Samuel 31 St. James Park Tredegar	Re-consultation revised description and revised plans. Second storey extension above double garage and conversion of double garage for annexe accommodation, 31 St. James Park.
<b>No objections</b>		
C/2021/0006	MJN Ltd. The Lindens Tysseg Lane Abertysswg	Industrial building subdivided into 6 small units and use of part of the site for the siting of approximately 14 metal containers units to be used as a container storage facility, land western end of HOV Hub Industrial Estate, Crown Avenue.
<b>No objections</b>		

**d) To consider other planning matters - None received.**

### **175) Matters of Local Interest or Concern (by prior notice)**

- Sincere condolences were extended to Steven Hughes on the sudden loss of his mother; Steven was an asset to Town Council and his help was greatly appreciated. It was agreed that a letter be sent.
- Flooding Market Street – a Member referred to flooding that had occurred in the vicinity of Market Street on 23<sup>rd</sup> December, 2020. Both the Local Authority and Welsh Water had undertaken works to the culvert, with the crews working during extreme weather conditions, and some residents had to move out of their homes. Unfortunately, it appeared that there was an issue with water ingress below the buildings in Market Street, and on the road by the old fire station, where water was flowing through the walls.

The problems residents were facing was that Blaenau CBC was applying to the Welsh Assembly for funding to do this work, which was resulting in a delay. Members felt that the Local Authority should undertake this work immediately and look for funding avenues whilst completing the necessary work.

Congratulations were extended to BG Officer, Wayne Jervis and his Team for the outstanding work carried out.

It was agreed that a letter outlining concerns be forwarded to Mr. Richard Crook, as the appropriate Head of Service.

- Wellbeing Centre – a Member referred to the unbearable drilling noise suffered by residents in the vicinity of the new development; residents acknowledged construction works were ongoing but asked if something could possibly be done to alleviate this noise nuisance. It was agreed that a letter be sent to the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board.
- Organisations to light buildings 'yellow' to mark the anniversary of Covid-19 pandemic; TTC was looking into the possible to a colour change to the Town Clock face on that date – ongoing.



There being no other business, the meeting closed at 8.10 p.m.

\_\_\_\_\_ Chair