



## **VOLUNTARY SECTOR LIAISON COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES OF THE MULTI-LOCATIONAL MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE  
AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON THURSDAY, 28TH NOVEMBER 2024 AT 10.30 A.M.**

PRESENT:

Chair – Councillor M. Chacon-Dawson  
Vice Chair – Mrs L. Jones (Menter Caerffili)

Councillors:

A. Broughton-Pettit, R. Chapman, P. Cook, H. Pritchard, Mrs E. Stenner and S. Williams.

Representatives of the Voluntary Sector:

J. Price (Bargoed YMCA), S. Tiley (GAVO), G. Jones (GAVO), K. Dawson (GAVO), R. Evans (Oakdale Community Centre) and J. Pritchard (The Youth Centre Cefn Hengoed).

Together with:

H. Delonnette (Senior Policy Officer), H. Pells (Policy Officer), V. Doyle (Policy Officer), E. Sullivan (Senior Committee Services Officer), H. Lancaster (Transformation Manager - Engagement) and S. Hughes (Committee Services Officer).

### **RECORDING ARRANGEMENTS**

The Chair reminded those present that the meeting was being live-streamed and a recording would be made available to view via the Council's website, except for discussions involving confidential or exempt items - [Click here to view](#). The Committee was advised that voting on decisions would be taken via a show of hands.

#### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J. Fussell, D. Harse, T. Heron, J. Jones, Mrs T. Parry, D.W.R. Preece, L.G. Whittle and W. Williams, together with A. Palmer (GAVO), R. Heaton-Jones (Llais), V. Pearson (Oakdale Partnership) and L. Chapman (Parent Network).

#### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received at the commencement or during the course of the meeting.

### **3. VOLUNTARY SECTOR LIAISON COMMITTEE HELD ON 26<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2024**

It was moved and seconded that the minutes of the Voluntary Sector Liaison Committee meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2024 be approved as a correct record. By way of a show of hands this was agreed by the majority present.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Voluntary Sector Liaison Committee meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2024 (minute nos. 1 – 6) be approved as a correct record.

### **4. MATTERS ARISING**

There were no matters arising.

### **5. ORGANISATION OF THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR LIAISON COMMITTEE MEETINGS (VERBAL UPDATE)**

The Senior Policy Officer provided an update on the organisation of the Voluntary Sector Liaison Committee meetings. It was noted that the Voluntary Sector Liaison Committee meetings are not achieving its purpose. As a result, and following discussions with Democratic Services and GAVO, a change of focus was proposed for the meetings going forward after the Annual General Meeting in May 2025. As the Committee meets quarterly, it was suggested that two formal meetings and two workshops be held in 2025/26. It was further suggested that the meeting to be held in June 2025 be a workshop to develop a forward work programme. The Committee was informed that the workshops would be informal and therefore not be required to be livestreamed or minuted.

The Senior Policy Officer also suggested that the new Police and Crime Commissioner be invited to the meeting in March 2025 to talk about her priorities and how the voluntary sector and public sector can work together to help shape and deliver those priorities. It was also suggested that Natural Resources Wales and the Council's Emergency Response Service be invited to a future meeting to discuss flood prevention.

Representatives of the Voluntary Sector appreciated the opportunity to review the meetings and welcomed the opportunity for workshops to discuss how the Voluntary Sector Liaison Committee moves forward and achieves its purpose. It was considered that the proposed change of focus would be a more collaborative approach, which would increase participation and engagement from Councillors and Voluntary Sector Representatives. It was expressed how the forward work programme would make meetings more effective with specific items being put forward for future meetings.

The Senior Committee Services Officer explained how the workshop opportunity would also provide a greater expanse of time between formal meetings to allow suitable notice for Compact Partners and Officers to attend a meeting, if required.

The Committee was informed that from September 2025 the Voluntary Sector Liaison Committee meetings will be held in the Sirhowy room at Penallta House, which was welcomed by Representatives of the Voluntary Sector as they felt it would be far more conducive to discussion.

In response to a query from a Representative of the Voluntary Sector, the Committee was advised that going forward the report on the Grants awarded via the Grants to the Voluntary Sector Fund and the Welsh Church Acts Fund would be presented on a 6-monthly basis at the formal Committee meetings.

The Voluntary Sector Liaison Committee noted the update.

## **6. DRAFT STRATEGIC VISION FOR LIBRARIES CONSULTATION (VERBAL UPDATE)**

The Transformation Manager for Engagement provided an update on the Draft Library Service Strategic Vision consultation. The Voluntary Sector Liaison Committee was informed that the consultation is currently underway and would run until 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2024. The Committee heard how the Draft Library Service Strategic Vision offers a series of proposals which could help transform the way the Council delivers its Library Service in the future, in a financially sustainable way. The Transformation Manager for Engagement highlighted the 4 key objectives: to improve and develop the library services availability and offer; help residents to access information, advice and support in a 'hub' location; put community needs at the heart of our town centre hubs, to support and encourage greater resilience for individuals through support and signposting; and to rationalise the number of buildings to maximise resources and improve the overall offer.

The Committee was informed that a number of informal drop-in sessions have been held across the borough for residents to learn more about the proposals, which have been very well attended. It was highlighted that the Draft Library Service Strategic Vision document and survey is available online and the Committee were encouraged to have their say.

A representative of the Voluntary Sector noted that the Draft Library Service Strategic Vision indicated that the development of a hub model would result in an overall reduction in library venues, to allow the Council to focus on the development of improved town centre hubs providing a one-stop-shop approach for community services. Concerns were raised regarding methods of travel to use the town centre hubs, particularly in relation to a lack of public transport. The Transformation Manager for Engagement acknowledged that transport is one of the key themes coming out of the consultation.

In response to a Councillor's query, the Committee were informed that since Rhymney Library reopened as a Hub at the beginning of January 2024, it has delivered additional Council led services to local residents including Caerphilly Cares, housing benefit and employment support as well as providing access for partners such as Gwent Police, the Health Board and Shelter. It was highlighted that there has been a significant increase in footfall and the feedback from the community has been very positive. A representative from the Voluntary Sector commented on the positive feedback received in relation to the Hub in Rhymney, in that it would have been from local residents and not from residents in the locations where library provision may need to be ceased. The Transformation Manager for Engagement acknowledged the comments and recognised that every community is different. It was explained that the consultation will help the Council to better understand the needs of the community in order to shape the development of the hub vision. In response to further comments, it was noted that Libraries support and offer a wide range of information resources as well as access to IT facilities. The Committee was informed regular engagement, including annual surveys, have taken place to understand how important the library and its services are for residents.

The Voluntary Sector Liaison Committee noted the update.

## **7. GRANTS AWARDED VIA THE GRANTS TO THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR FUND AND THE WELSH CHURCH ACTS FUND**

The Policy Officer, Vicki Doyle, presented the report to inform the Voluntary Sector Liaison Committee of the budget available for the Grants to the Voluntary Sector Fund for 2024/25 and the grants awarded between 1st September and 31st October 2024. The Committee was also informed of the budget available for the Welsh Church Acts Fund for 2024/25 and the grants awarded between 1st September and 31st October 2024.

In response to a Members query regarding the level of grant available for the Welsh Church Acts Fund, the Committee was advised that the annual income for the fund is approximately £60,000. Grants of up to a maximum of £7,500 are available, however once the underspend

has been utilised the amount is likely to be reduced to the previous maximum level of £5,000 in order to support as many organisations as possible.

RESOLVED that the applications received that met the criteria for the Grants to the Voluntary Sector Fund and the Welsh Church Acts Fund, which have already been approved by the Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer under delegated powers, and which are reported to the Voluntary Sector Liaison Committee for information be noted.

The meeting closed at 11.26 am.

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2025, they were signed by the Chair.

---

CHAIR