



## **SPECIAL VOLUNTARY SECTOR LIAISON COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MULTI-LOCATIONAL MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE  
AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON WEDNESDAY 29<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2025 AT 10.30 A.M.**

PRESENT:

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

Councillors:

A. Broughton-Pettit, P. Cook, J. Jones, Mrs T. Parry, D.W.R. Preece, H. Pritchard,  
Mrs E. Stenner, L.G. Whittle and W. Williams.

Representatives of the Voluntary Sector:

R. Evans (Blaenau Gwent and Caerphilly Care & Repair), S. Ellington (Citizens Advice Caerphilly Blaenau Gwent), C. Williams (Cruse in Gwent), A. Palmer (GAVO), G. Jones (GAVO), C. Clark (Little Theatre Blackwood), R. Evans (Oakdale Community Centre), L. Brosnan-James (Oakdale Partnership), J. Pritchard (The Youth, Centre Cefn Hengoed) and W. Lewis (Vision 21).

Together with:

S. Harris (Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer), L. Sykes (Deputy Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer), H. Delonnette (Senior Policy Officer), H. Lancaster (Transformation Manager - Engagement), V. Doyle (Policy Officer), S. Hughes (Committee Services Officer) and A. Jones (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](#).

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R. Chapman, J. Fussell, D. Harse, T. Heron and S. Williams, together with representatives of Aber Valley Heritage Group, Adferiad (Carers), Barod Cymru, Caerphilly People First, GAVO, Llais and Thriving Communities CIC.

## 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor J.A. Pritchard (in her capacity as a representative of the Voluntary Sector) sought advice in relation to Agenda Item 3 – Draft Budget Proposals for 2025/26, Appendix 2 of the Report, Reference Number ELL19, in that she is a member of the Management Committee for the Youth Centre, Cefn Hengoed. Councillor J.A. Pritchard was advised that there was no interest to declare as there was no decision to be made.

## 3. DRAFT BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2025/26

The Head of Financial Services and Section 151 Officer introduced the report and outlined details of the draft budget proposals for the 2025/26 financial year. The Voluntary Sector Liaison Committee were asked to consider and comment upon the content of the report prior to Final Budget Proposals being presented to Council on 27th February 2025.

In response to a query from a representative of GAVO, the Head of Financial Services and Section 151 Officer advised the Committee that at present there are no firm proposals being made in terms of cuts to the voluntary sector Service Level Agreements. However, going forward there will be ongoing dialogue in terms of what will be delivered and what payments will be made. The Committee was informed that the Caerphilly Cares Manager will be working with the Voluntary Sector to explore whether further efficiencies can be made moving forward. Responding to a further query from a representative of the Voluntary Sector, the Committee was informed that any proposal that would lead to a budget adjustment may require a Cabinet decision. Therefore, as part of that process, consultation would take place with Members and the Voluntary Sector Liaison Committee on any proposals to reduce the Service Level Agreements.

A representative of the Voluntary Sector raised concerns regarding the proposed reduction in the Youth Service budget. Reference was made to in-year savings linked to staff vacancies and questions were raised regarding the recruitment process. The Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer advised the Committee that there is no detrimental impact in terms of what is being proposed, as this was a temporary saving in 2024/25 which has been achieved and managed. With regards to the recruitment process the Committee was advised that the comments made would be communicated to the Head of People Services. The representative of the Voluntary Sector expressed how the Youth Service carries out an essential function and reduces anti-social behaviour. The representative of the Voluntary Sector also disagreed with the proposed ceasing of the Community Safety Warden Service, which was noted by the Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer.

Clarification was sought on the separate proposal to increase the charges for Caerphilly Adventures and Positive Futures by 20%. The Head of Financial Services and Section 151 Officer explained that the service is provided largely to schools and that the proposal will ensure that the full cost for the service is recovered. It was highlighted that the proposed increase will not provide additional income to support the savings target for 2025/26 but will ensure that the service is sustainable moving forward. A Member raised concerns regarding the financial pressures schools face and the impact of the additional costs on their individual budgets. In response, the Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer informed the Committee that the Finance Team will continue to work with schools to help mitigate the impact of some of the proposals.

A Member disagreed with the proposal for the removal of 9 school crossing patrol sites and expressed concerns regarding the impact of child safety, which was noted by the Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer.

The Member also disagreed with the proposal to remove the Community Empowerment Fund as it provides a valuable contribution for local community groups to develop and deliver projects. However, it was acknowledged the Community Empowerment Fund had not been utilised in some wards and therefore a suggestion was made that any unspent monies be

returned to the General Fund. The Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer noted the comments made and stressed how the Council is facing very difficult decisions going forward.

A representative of the Voluntary Sector commented on the Council's current financial situation. Further comments were made regarding some of the issues already being faced by Community Centre Management Committees, which included the recharges for caretaking costs, and other departments within the Council hiring outside premises rather than Council owned Community Centres. The Head of Financial Services and Section 151 Officer responded to all the comments made and was pleased to note that discussions have taken place with relevant Officers in relation to some of the issues faced by Community Centres.

RESOLVED that the Voluntary Sector Liaison Committee considered and commented upon the content of the report prior to Final Budget Proposals being presented to Council on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2025.

The Chair thanked Members and Officers for their attendance and contributions and the meeting closed at 11.06 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.

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CHAIR