

Minutes



Liaison Meeting with Community Councils

Date: 5 October 2023

Time: 6.00 pm

Present: Cath Davies (Marshfield CC), Mandy George (Llanwern), Nathan Tarr (Graig), Judy Clatworthy (Wentlooge), Julie Foster (Wentlooge) John Davies (Bishton), Councillor Yvonne Forsey (Rogerstone West), Councillor Bev Davies (Rogerstone East), Andrew Mitchell (Chair of Standards Committee), Leanne Rowlands, (Democratic and Electoral Services Manager), Katherine Majer (Deputy Democratic and Electoral Services Manager) Janice Dent (Policy and Partnerships Manager), Saffron Bowtell (Climate Change Officer), Emily Mayger (Governance Officer), Simon Richards (Governance Officer)

1 Apologies

2 Declaration of Interest

3 Minutes of the Meeting Held 22.06.23

The Minutes from the previous meeting held 22nd June 2023 were agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager Manager wished to report back on some matters raised in the previous meeting.

The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager Manager confirmed that the number required for the meeting to be quorate was a third of the total number of members; the quorate number can include the chair.

The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager noted that there was no published Service Level Agreement for the Public Ombudsman for Wales to investigate and include a complaint about breaching Code of Conduct.

A Community Councillor queried whether training on personal safety had been arranged and the Democratic and Electoral Services Manager explained that there had been some delays but that this was being progressed.

A Community Councillor stated that there had been a Police presence at their last meeting which was welcomed.

The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager stated that Superintendent Jason White had committed to attend every other meeting meaning there would be the opportunity to raise any issues in those meetings.

4 The Consultation Draft of Newport's Local Action Plan

The Policy and Partnerships Manager presented the item. One Newport is a partnership of the main public agencies in Newport including Newport City Council, Aneurin Bevan

University Health Board, Gwent Police, Natural Resources Wales and also key local organisations like Newport City Homes and Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations. Local Action Plans (LAPs) developed by the five local partnerships that support the Gwent PSB, including One Newport, provide clarity on the local actions required to support the Well-being Objectives agreed by the Gwent PSB for the regional Well-being Plan. The previous plan had come to an end in April. The Policy and Partnerships Manager noted that the new plan would be in place for 5 years and added that all Local Authorities were in a stage of developing local action plans under the regional Gwent Public Services Board based on the priorities of the over-arching strategy.

The Policy and Partnerships Manager informed the Community Council Representatives about the public consultation that was now open on the draft version of Newport's Local Action Plan.

The main themes identified from feedback during initial engagement work had been the Economy and Culture, Strengthening the Community and Community Resilience, Cohesion and Safety and the Environment.

The Policy and Partnerships Manager noted that consultation had mainly taken place via online engagement, but also through outreach in public spaces and at local events. The Policy and Partnerships Manager asked the Community Council members for their feedback and added that they would also appreciate the representatives sharing the surveys with their local residents to encourage them to take part. The Policy and Partnerships Manager informed the Community Council Representatives that they were able to provide support for those who were unable to do it online.

The Community Council Representatives asked whether this could be shared on social media so they could promote it in their localised groups.

- The Policy and Partnerships Manager stated that they could and that they would send a link that could be shared.

The Policy and Partnerships Manager noted that she was happy to take any feedback or Questions from the meeting back but highlighted the importance of encouraging local residents to engage as part of the process.

A Community Councillor noted the quantity of information provided to consider as part of the consultation.

- The Policy and Partnerships Manager stated that there had been an effort to find a balance in the amount of information provided to encourage informed and meaningful participation and added that if the Community Councils had any questions at a later date, they were welcome to get in touch.

A Community Councillor queried when the consultation period ended.

- The Policy and Partnerships Manager noted that the end date was the 14th October but added that as the results were not required to be fed back until December there would be some scope to extend it.
- A Community Councillor stated that an extension would be a good idea and suggested the end of October.
- The Policy and Partnerships Manager agreed to the extension.

5 The Gwent Well-being Plan

The Policy and Partnerships Manager stated that the Gwent Public Services Board (PSB) was created in 2021 as this was thought to be more impactful than there only being the separate PSBs that had been in place prior to this. The Policy and Partnerships Manager noted that part of the Gwent PSB's functions was to have a Wellbeing Assessment Plan. The Policy and Partnerships Manager noted that the Wellbeing Assessment had been published in 2022 and that Newport had 6 areas of assessment. The Policy and Partnerships Manager stated that there had been a consultation period and that the results had been amalgamated to create a draft which the final plan would be published setting out planned improvements on the key areas. The Policy and Partnerships Manager

The Policy and Partnerships Manager noted that the draft plan had been published and there were a few amendments to be made but once this had been finalised that it would be updated on the public website and information circulated in Libraries and community spaces. The Policy and Partnerships Manager noted that two interconnecting objectives had been identified from the Well-being Assessment and gave a brief description of each.

- 1. 'We want to create a fairer, more equitable and inclusive Gwent for all'.
- 2 'We want a climate-ready Gwent, where our environment is valued and protected, benefitting our well-being now and for future generations.'

. The Policy and Partnerships Manager stated that there had been a focus on the Marmot principles in the assessment, which are indicators of health and life expectancy.

The Policy and Partnerships Manager stated that there were 179 recommendations to be worked on but highlighted that this is a long-term plan and that the benefits of some would not be immediately obvious. The Policy and Partnerships Manager stated that there was a meeting to look at how to address these issues which will form part of the action plan. The Policy and Partnerships Manager concluded by encouraging the Community Council Representatives to read the reports and consider ways that these inequalities can be addressed through working together.

The Democratic and Electoral Services Manger thanked the Policy and Partnerships Manager and noted the ambition.

The Chair of Standards Committee queried how the partner organisations in the Gwent PSB had been selected.

- The Policy and Partnerships Manager stated that the PSB had corresponding Legislation and that there was a list of ones that are co-opted for particular work. The Policy and Partnerships Manager noted that there were some organisations who acted as conduits for a larger sector.

A Community Councillor questioned whether there was any further information on Marmot principles.

- The Policy and Partnerships Manager stated that Professor Marmot had first published a report in 2010 and then had revisited this after the Covid Pandemic to see whether there had been any improvements. There had not been any changes, which Professor Marmot considered had signified that current systems were not working despite the best efforts of many. The research is considered a challenging read but aims to incentivise better collaboration and approaches.

The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager concluded by thanking the Policy and Partnerships Manager and highlighting the actions going forward.

- The Policy and Partnerships Manager was to share the appropriate links to the Community Councillors to promote the consultations within their communities.
- The Policy and Partnerships Manager stated that she would extend the closing date of the consultation to the end of October.

6 **Climate Change- Support for Community Councils**

The Climate Change Officer presented a number of opportunities for communities. The Climate Change Officer stated that two networks were being reinstated. The Climate Change Officer informed the committee that the first network was the Newport Environment Network which has the core principles of accessible dedicated green spaces for residents in Newport. The Climate Change Officer stated that the previous network had a wide range of members and when surveyed there was a great sense that people were still keen to be involved. The Climate Change Officer stated that they wished to promote the Network out to more people and noted that they would be very appreciative of the Community Council Representatives encouraging participation in their wards. The Climate Change Officer noted that the creation of the Networks was to create a space that enabled joint working and encouraged involvement in projects.

The Climate Change Officer stated that they were aiming to support quarterly meetings with an in person launch event which will be advertised when confirmed.

The Climate Change Officer informed the Community Council Representatives that the second Network was new and brings together Newport Climate Champions. The Climate Change Officer explained that this network has a similar goal to the Newport Environment Network but with a broader remit, focusing on all groups interested in taking Climate Action. The Climate Change Officer noted that the Network would also be a space to connect and network whilst providing a link to the Council to discuss concerns.

The Climate Change Officer stated that there was no commitment required to attend either Networks but noted that they wished for the participation of as many people as possible. The Climate Change Officer noted that there would be quarterly meetings and a launch event for this Network as well.

The Climate Change Officer highlighted some opportunities that could be taken up by residents depending on their eligibility including the ECO4 Flex free energy efficiency upgrades, the Great British Insulation Scheme, Community Decarbonisation, and further EV chargers.

A Community Councillor queried whether the energy efficiency grants were only available to those on benefits. The Councillor noted that for many rural communities the houses are in a high Council Tax band and queried what could be done to support those people who may also be struggling financially.

- The Climate Change Officer stated that each scheme has their own eligibility criteria and noted that one was based on Council Tax bands and that another was based on the Energy efficiency rating of the property.
- The Climate Change Officer stated that the ECO4 Flex energy efficiency upgrades had a different criterion that was not relating to Council Tax.

The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager queried whether the Climate Change Officer wished for the Community Councils to put forward representatives for these networks.

- The Climate Change Officer stated that they would be happy for the engagement from Community Councils and Residents or whoever wished to get in touch.

A Community Council Representative queried whether there would be any consultation with Community Councillors in regard to the Green Spaces.

- The Climate Change Officer noted that she could attend communities to do a presentation but noted that primarily the Networks are for the engagement of everyone.
- A Community Council Representative queried whether their views would be considered as there had been previous history of local knowledge not being taken on from Climate Champions in the past.
- The Climate Change Officer informed the Community Council Representatives that this was the aim of the Networks and that the information and ideas were to come from the communities themselves and highlighted the importance of their comments.

The Climate Change Officer explained that they would be offering surveys for peoples input into improving carbon emissions and added that the Council may then be able to fund some of those works.

The Climate Change Officer informed the committee that they were expanding the EV Charging network and that further funding from the Welsh Government had been used to install 9 additional chargers with a plan on installing a further 6. The Climate Change Officer noted that there officers that would be able to address any EV-related questions or concerns or feedback if they wished to get in touch.

A Community Council Representative queried whether the Building Surveys could be done on a building that was owned by Newport City Council.

- The Climate Change Officer noted that this would have to be looked into as there are planned energy efficiency upgrades on many buildings owned by Newport City Council.
- A Community Council Representative queried whether this would include a Village Hall.

- The Climate Change Officer stated it would and highlighted the correct contact details for that issue.

The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager concluded by thanking the Climate Change Officer and highlighting the actions going forward.

- The Governance Officer was to share the slides from the meeting to the Community Councils.
- The Community Councils were to get in contact with the Climate Change Officer if they wished for her to attend a meeting and presenting further information.
- A list of upcoming events was to be shared once confirmed.
- Further information on the Building Surveys was to be shared with the Community Councils.

7 Voter ID

The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager introduced the presentation.

- The Elections Act 2022 had brought about some key changes with the biggest of those being the introduction of Voter ID as well as changes in other areas such as EU voters and those overseas. However, the focus of the presentation was on that of Voter ID.
 - The purpose of Voter ID was to reduce the risk of voter fraud as well as make the electoral process fairer. The Voter ID will also prevent the electoral offence known as impersonation but there has been some criticism in relation to voter ID making it harder for some to vote.
 - From 4th May 2023 Voter ID was required for parliamentary elections as well as Police and Crime Commission elections UK-wide. In England it will also apply to local elections, but not for Wales.
 - There are 23 accepted forms of ID include Passports and driving licenses, these can be expired if there is a likeness.
 - If a person does not have a valid ID, they are still able to apply for Voter ID.
 - Voter ID will be provided free from the Electoral Register Office and through research it was expected around 2% of voters will need Voter ID.
 - In Wales Voter ID was not being publicised yet but in England it has been publicised due to it taking effect on Elections within England first.
 - The Application can either be done online or be supported in person.
 - A centralised fulfilment centre currently exists however this could move to a more local scale in the future.
 - The physical Voter ID is an A4 document and has some security measures such as those used within legal currency.
 - The Electoral Commission will publicise the need for the Voter ID before the voting is scheduled to take place as well as providing materials to local councils in order for them to distribute to residents.
 - Polling stations must have a space in order for people to show their Voter ID in private, funding for any materials needed for this space will be provided.
 - The Presiding Officer within the polling station has the right to refuse a voter if they don't have valid ID, or if they feel the ID provided is not legitimate. The decision to refuse is final, however these refusals can be subject to a review.
 - There will be challenges such as raising awareness in order for the residents to have adequate time to get their Voter ID
 - The Electoral Commission is focused on making sure no communities are disenfranchised.
- The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager stated that the first elections that this would affect for Newport would be the upcoming PCC elections in May 2024 and

added that there had been a considerable effort to make it clear what was needed from voters on the website.

The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager highlighted some examples of what was accepted forms of ID and noted that the identification document you apply for on the website would be free of charge. The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager informed the committee that the deadline for the IDs would be 5pm 6 working days prior to the poll and added that there would be clear communications circulated information people of this cut-off date. The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager stated that this did not need to be done for each vote and that the IDs themselves would be valid for 10 years.

A Community Councillor queried what an anonymous elector was.

- The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager stated that this would be a person who for specific reasons could not have their details on an electoral register would still be able to vote.

The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager stated that there was the potential for confusion over what IDs are accepted and explained that the difference in the type of ID had come from the level of verification needed to obtain it originally and added that there was further information on the website. The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager stated that as well as applying through the portal there would be the option to come to the Civic Centre and an officer would facilitate your application. The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager stated that there was an importance on the photo being clear but noted that it was not as stringent as passport photo requirements.

A Community Councillor queried whether a buss pass would be acceptable.

- The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager stated that it would depend on the type as some passes need stricter verification and those ones would be accepted.

The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager stated that information learnt from the England Elections had fed into plans for the next election and highlighted the importance on communication on social media and through community groups to ensure that there is not a disproportionate effect on marginalised groups. The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager stated that there would be some outreach work to promote this and informed the Community Council Representatives that they would be happy to come and give a talk at one of their meetings.

A Community Councillor queried whether they could assist people with their applications or whether they should be directed to the Council.

- The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager stated that they would come up with the best plan of action and feed this back.

The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager stated that in the polling stations there would be a focus on accessibility and added there would be private areas available to those who request it to show their ID but noted that the only persons who should see an ID would be the Poll Clerk or the Presiding Officer. The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager stated that the Polling Officer must not give a voting slip to those who's IDs do not match and that the decision to refuse by the Poll Clerk would be final.

The Community Council Representatives showed concern that this may put people off signing up to be poll clerks.

- The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager stated that the evidence from England had not shown a reluctance but that the training had to be clear to ensure that they felt supported.

A Community Council Representative queried whether this would affect postal votes.

- The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager stated that this would be the case as the verification happens prior to the poll and noted this may be of use for those at work during the day.

The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager noted that there would be challenges to ensure that there was adequate communication to people in good time, issues around

inequality, an increased financial burden as well as extra challenges faced by poll centre staff.

A Community Councillor noted that it may be beneficial for Polling Clerks to advise people with invalid ID what could be used so that they have an opportunity to come back and vote with the correct ID.

- The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager stated that this had happened in England but added that the issue would then be if that person did have valid ID elsewhere as it would be too late to apply for one at that stage.

8 Date of the Next Meeting

The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager stated that the Police would attend at the next meeting and provide information of Health and Safety and noted that there would be a session on Personal Safety but that this would be done separately.

The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager stated that they would be covering the Local Development Plan as well as a discussion on the Community Council Charter as an agenda item and queried whether the Community Council Representatives wished for the Clerks to attend this meeting.

A Community Councillor wished to raise an issue on the speed limit changes across Wales due to there being some confusion within the communities.

- The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager noted that it was a big change but informed the Community Council Representatives that it was a Welsh Government decision and so is not under Newport City Councils remit but added that if it was to do with signage to get in touch or complete the online form with specific locations and these can be assessed.

The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager noted that the next meeting had been set for December but queried whether this could be brought forward to the 30th November to align with the LDP Wales.