

Draft Minutes

Liaison Meeting with Community Councillors

Date: 9 December 2021

Time: 6:00pm

Venue: Microsoft Teams Meeting

Present: G. Price (Head of Law and Regulation (Chair), Pamela Tasker (Governance Support Officer), Nicola Dance (Senior Policy & Partnership Officer), Karen Gregg (Operations Support Manager), Alun Prescott (Neighbour Hub Manager), Ceri Foot (Service Manager Customer Services), Arabella Calder (Senior Policy & Partnership Officer (Leader))

Nigel Hallett (Michaelston y Fedw), John Davies (Bishton), Cath Davis (Marshfield), Mandy George (Llanwern), Julie Foster (Wentlooge), Brian Miles (Wentlooge), Paul Gregory (Graig).

1. Apologies

None

2. Minutes from the Last Meeting: 15 September 2021

Agreed:

That the minutes from the last meeting 15 September 2021 were a true record.

3. Matters Arising

The Chair noted the written answer from the Service Manager of Waste and Cleansing stating no correlation between fly tipping and changes to the HWRC.

4. Carbon Literacy Training

The community councils received a presentation from the Senior Policy & Partnership Officer. It was explained that this training was an initiative under One Newport Partnership to develop skills and knowledge through the Vale of Usk Leader Programme which was the source of funding for the project.

Main Points:

- Free carbon literacy training to be offered to community councils in Newport and Monmouthshire as it was a joint initiative between those two areas.

- Community councils would be learning about the link between human activity and climate change, and that would give them the knowledge to take action to reduce carbon emissions on an individual level or on a community council level.
- A bid was made to the Rural Development Fund which was successful, and it applied to the Vale of Usk LEADER area comprising Monmouthshire and rural wards in Newport including Llanwern, Marshfield, Graig, Caerleon and Langstone. In terms of community councils training the training is to be extended to all the 14 community councils to be delivered in the new year by Cynnal Cymru.
- 116 free online training places available for members of Community Councils and up to 90 free places available for members of the community in the area.
- Train the Trainer also applied where people who had received the training can also go on to deliver the training themselves further down the line.
- Training to run online from January to March 2022 – Two online sessions with one hour of self-directed learning.
- The training will inform people of the facts and science behind climate change, hear about the impact of different actions and develop actions plans using their knowledge. The course was also accredited with a certificate on completion.
- 4 opportunities to sign up with a course in January, 2 in February and 1 in March 2022.

The next step was that as of next week community councils clerks would be written to, to invite people to pre-register their interest with the booking link. One person can register on behalf of their community council with potential to extend that to more people.

Community councils were also asked to help identify groups looking after community buildings in their area and to also promote this training to residents in their area who might be interested.

Questions:

The Michaelston y Fedw representative enquired about the 116 places but only one community councils representative from each council to attend the training and the Senior Policy & Partnership Officer confirmed that the 116 places also included Monmouthshire which takes up the bulk of places and it was also available to organisations running community buildings.

The Marshfield representative stated that there would be a lot of groups interested in Marshfield and enquired as to whether there were any posters available to send on to these groups.

The Senior Policy & Partnership Officer confirmed that the information would be sent out via the Governance Support Officer to the Community Council clerks next week.

Community Councils were also encouraged to follow the One Newport Partnership on Twitter for more information and to share the information on their newsletters.

5. Customer Complaints- Contact Centre

The Service Manager Customer Services and the Operations Support Manager attended to speak to Community Councils about issues mentioned in the previous meeting regarding difficulties in how issues were reported, issues with the app and also reports of some customers not being called back.

Main Points:

- The Service Manager Customer Services explained that the contact centre has a system where issues get logged and this was the same system that residents use to set up their accounts with 50,000 residents having set up own accounts and this was integrated with the back office system.
- The contact centre operators operate from a system called A TO Z, which was a massive knowledge database. If you were to call to report a missed waste collection or to report a pothole for example, they would use that database to answer your call. The information that's on that database was owned by the service areas. Service areas give the customer services team information on how they want their calls handled.
- The agent searches for potholes or missed waste and they have scripting to help with this call.
- If a call needed to be logged, then it goes to the back office.
- When the A to Z was set up, the back offices agreed on the information held on that data set, they agreed what information that goes back to the customer, then they agreed with us a level of service agreement e.g., what the time scale is to get back to customers.
- The contact centre does not receive any information from the service area, once the call has left customer services, it was up to the back office to contact the customer.
- If the call was logged then it goes to the service area back office, whatever goes on that record was relayed back to the customer via an email.
- If nothing was being fed back, then it was likely that the back office had not updated the record.

Questions:

The Marshfield representative asked what back office meant and whether it referred to each individual department such as Planning etc but also that residents have said that they have not received any feedback at all so this was an issue.

The Service Manager Customer Services explained that if a customer rang in to report a pothole, then this was logged under the customer's name, address, and their email address and this goes through to the Highways system which then created a job for the inspector. The inspector adds a note to their system when then comes back to the customer.

The Operations Support Manager added that if a customer has a registered customer account, the account should be checked. There were about 85,000 registered customer accounts now across Newport. The requests should be in the customer's account portal and the customer should be able to look at their bookings. It was stated that maybe the customer portal should be looked at and maybe the service areas were logging internal notes rather than for the customer. An email was not generated for everything.

The Wentlooge representative stated that they have used the account for years and the app since it first came out, but that the app was temperamental, and the main issue was the portal and the only route to chase this up was through the Council.

The Wentlooge representative stated that the main issue was that he received no feedback and there were never any notes on the portal. They wanted to reduce calls to the contact centre, and they encouraged residents to come to them with issues to contact their community councils as a single point of call. It was stated that it was embarrassing to meet

the resident and you have nothing to say back to that resident and it was felt community councils needed more information.

The Wentlooge representative stated that previously on waste day he had received over 30 calls where waste wasn't collected and still did not get an answer until Friday when he was told he would have to wait until next week. The Wentlooge representative felt that if he was told that waste collections were not to be made until that Friday, he could have relayed this back to residents and their waste could be removed from the street rather than it being left out for a few days.

The Service Manager Customer Services agreed that there were issues with communication as sometimes the contact centre does not know the streets that were missed until the next day. It could be looked at where emails could be sent to the ward if that would help.

The Wentlooge representative stated that this would help but that it was only one example as they had completed a survey of the road in question and reported 119 potholes and someone came back asking him if they were correct as there was so many.

The Service Manager Customer Services asked the Chair whether they felt this issue could be raised in CMT.

The Chair confirmed that this needed to be discussed with Heads of Service and the Service Manager Customer Services agreed something could be put together for the corporate director. It was also noted that it was outside city services so needs to be taken further as the contact centre were reliant on other departments.

The Wentlooge representative stated that maybe there could be a facility for flagging up in terms of the community councils.

Councillor Forsey stated that when they go back to look at the report that they had made, it stated closed, and it doesn't give more information than this which was quite unhelpful.

The Service Manager Customer Services stated that there should be something that says how the issue was progressing and this would be raised.

The Graig representative asked as to what happened if someone contacted the contact centre and they had no email account but were given a reference number then how were they contacted to say how this was actioned.

The Operations Support Manager confirmed people could also log on as a guest and not be registered but that there was no email sent out if a person was a guest or if they rang the contact centre, as long as contact details were given, they should be contacted.

The Operations Support Manager asked whether the app had been heavily promoted.

The Wentlooge representative stated that contact details had been circulated to all the communities on all aspects of reporting which included the app, how to contact the Council by phone and what they should report to who e.g., large waste needed to be reported to NRW.

The Service Manager Customer Services confirmed the app was not promoted over the phone. If a query was emailed in, that person was emailed back with a reference number, but the hyperlink was also included to report an issue in future at the address below.

The Graig representative asked as when a resident called in why were they not told that if they emailed in, they would be automatically contacted back.

The Service Manager Customer Services confirmed that when a customer rang in, they were automatically asked did they have an account and an email address to be searched by as an account was not able to be set up without one.

The Graig representative stated that this did not happen in their situation.

The Service Manager Customer Services stated that they would check this as an email should be asked for.

The Marshfield representative confirmed that they had an email address and had a long list of issues they had reported but never had received any feedback on any of them.

The Service Manager Customer Services asked whether the Marshfield representative had ever gone back into the customer portal and had a look at their requests.

The Marshfield representative confirmed that they had not but thought that if their telephone number and email address was there, they thought that they would be able to receive some kind of feedback on issues.

The Operations Support Manager explained that 'My Council Services' (MCS) was the software used by Torfaen, Monmouth, Caerphilly etc and customers get used to using the same forms. The 'My Council Services' app was being developed and internal staff used it e.g., highways officers use the same app as the customer. There was also a customer portal where everything a customer did should be on the app and they're building the Council tax section. The admin portal was also for staff including 130 forms etc so quite a big system and it has been in development since 2018. MCS needs feedback and community councils were key so engagement with them was very important, so the team were very appreciating of any feedback. At the end an email address for the team would be provided to community councils so any queries on the forms etc could be sent into them.

The Marshfield representative stated that they did not know that you had to be registered to receive feedback.

The Operations Support Manager explained that MCS integrates with a lot of the service area systems, so this was all automated and they stated that the team maybe haven't concentrated on getting information back, but this needs work. For community councils the actual info is what was needed to feedback to residents.

The Wentlooge representative stated that what was clear during Covid that the bond between the community and community councils had grown. They felt that they did not want to report things over and over to the Council and feedback was so important. They stated that the Police had to become involved in a matter due to a potential driving offence where someone could have been charged through no fault of their own but if the information had been received from Highways, then this could have been fed back. The Wentlooge representative stated they struggled to see how the service could be given to the community if they were the same as the 85,000 registered on the system. They reiterated that they wanted to stop the number of calls that came into the contact centre as residents did not want to report to Newport City Council directly anymore.

The Operations Support Manager stated that as they managed the system, they needed to be able to liaise with the system departments and their team needed to understand what the Community Councils needed.

The Chair stated that there were collective issues in the community, in other individual cases then residents needed to use the app and report through the 'My Newport' account. It was probably not really advisable to encourage people to report everything to a community councillor. If there was an easy response to the complaint, then this was ideal.

The Wentlooge representative stated that if there was information coming back and information that residents should know, this could be posted on the social media groups locally. Residents were looking to community councils more now than ever.

The Chair acknowledged that for collective issues early messages needed to be sent out and this could be looked at.

Councillor Forsey stated that they had reported an issue on the 17 November 2021 and there was nothing on this issue with no reply and it was still open.

The Service Manager Customer Services stated that this was the problem as there was no response and it caused repeat calls to the contact centre. They explained that as a customer services manager they wanted people to report issues themselves and then reports could be pulled from the system to analyse what the top service requests were to target the issues with the appropriate service area. If a job was still open, then it needed a note to say that the issue was being investigated.

Councillor Forsey provided her reference number from November to the Service Manager Customer Services for her to look into.

The Wentlooge representative stated that they had been in a few meetings where 'fly mappers' were on the agenda as when he reported waste, he reported it to Fly Mapper and then he reported it to Newport City Council on their system, but it would be much easier if it was one system.

The Operations Support Manager stated that they worked with Christine the Trade and Enforcement Manager and her team in relation to fly tipping who use MCS to do their work. The Operations Support Manager explained that they had spoken to Natural Resources Wales about Fly Mapper and the other system they upload their data to, and the team could send their data as Monmouth does from MCS, so there were discussions ongoing about this.

The Wentlooge representative stated that they were part of the pilot on Fly Mapper at the start and it meant that data needed to be reported on two systems as the NRW system doesn't talk to MCS.

The Operations Support Manager explained that Monmouth Council provided data from MCS in a spreadsheet which could be uploaded onto Fly Mapper so the call could be recorded on MCS, and their teams internally run the report with all the Fly Mapper data needed.

The Operations Support Manager confirmed they would be speaking to the Trade and Enforcement Manager in January 2022 about Fly Mapper and how the team helped them as they were doing the same and they didn't want to duplicate their work. Fly Mapper have been spoken to about interested piece and it will be looked at one system would be ideal.

6. Response times from Newport City Council Officers

The Graig representative stated that this agenda item followed on from what was spoken about previously and they had lots of examples where they had emailed officers in the

Council and had received no reply. It was promised to them that senior officers would come back to them, and they did not receive an answer.

The Graig representative stated that they had met ten years ago with city council officials regarding a speed sign between The Ruperra and The Friendly Fox. There were meetings where it was agreed for the sign to be moved and would cost the community council £350 and it would not be done until money was paid up front. The Graig representative stated that they had met with services who did not understand why the community council would be asked for payment, but there was still no response regarding this matter.

The Chair reiterated that the community councils needed to come through the Monitoring Officer and the Governance Support Officer if they had not received a response as they were the central point of contact as stated in the Charter.

The Graig representative stated that some of the issues were health and safety issues which were serious and needed to be addressed straight away in July 2021. The Chair stated that if there was no response received then the issues could be brought to the Governance Support Officer and the Monitoring officer to be escalated if necessary.

The Graig representative referred to a letter sent to the Monitoring Officer in January 2019 from Graig Community Council regarding a matter where it was stated that the report would be taken to a Cabinet Member in June. The Chair stated that this would be dealt with but at the moment this was not the forum for this to be discussed.

The Chair stated that the Council had not yet taken a discussion on this matter, and it would be progressed.

The Chair stated that in relation to the agenda item being discussed and that in relation to individual complaints they would be dealt with by customer services. As a community council raising issues this needed to be sent to the service area.

The Marshfield representative stated that on the matter of communication they enquired if Newport Council had an intranet, so the community councils could have access to this.

The Chair confirmed that it was not appropriate to give out officers numbers etc, especially junior officers and it would not help the community councils as they were not treated any different to the city councillors. Contact details of senior managers could be provided and their service managers could also be contacted.

The Chair noted that the community councils could receive details of Heads of Service, but they should only be contacted if absolutely necessary. If the community council did not know the service area in question, they could go through the Governance Support Officer.

7. Any Other Business

The Marshfield representative explained that there had been a meeting with Matthew Sharpe Development and Regeneration Manager and Neil Gunther Senior Planning Enforcement Officer which was held this week and was very worthwhile and officers were very helpful.

The Graig representative asked whether Newport City Council had issued any covid guidance on hiring out community halls as Welsh Government guidance was very vague. The Chair confirmed that we did not advise on this for that reason and directed people to the Welsh Government guidance as it was up to them to provide the guidance. However, Newport City Council could help with risk assessments.

The Wentlooge representative stated that their hall had a restriction on it and other halls had small gatherings, so the hall set their own guidelines.

The Graig representative confirmed they had allowed karate classes to continue but did not allow children's parties as they were difficult to monitor.

The Chair stated that at level 0 it had been pushed back to organisers and managers of the premises to decide.

The Wentlooge representative stated that their hall decided to keep track and trace even though it was not a legal requirement anymore.

8. Date of the Next Meeting

24 March 2022 at 6pm