



21st November 2023

Dear Councillor.

Pursuant to the requirements of **Section 47 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021**, you are hereby summoned to attend the Council Extraordinary meeting which will be held remotely on **Wednesday the 6th of December 2023 commencing at 6:30pm** for the purpose of transacting the business shown in the agenda set below.

Should you wish to attend the meeting remotely, you should contact the Chief Officer to the Council to request a remote invitation.

Members of the public have the right to ask questions at Council meetings and to speak in Welsh or English, provided that at least three working days' notice in writing of the question has been provided to the Chief Officer.

Agenda

1. To receive any questions from the public.
2. To receive and accept apologies.
3. **Declarations of Interest:** Members are invited to declare any interests they may have in any items on the agenda.
4. To receive a presentation from Ashleigh Taylor (Hwb Torfaen) concerning the proposed 'Windows to Positivity' project.
5. To discuss and make any relevant determinations concerning match funding of the proposed 'Windows to Positivity' project.

Yours Sincerely

Kevin Warren. MLoL. FCML.
Chief Officer.
Blaenavon Town Council.



BLAENAVON TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF AN EXTRAORDINARY MEETING
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 6th of DECEMBER 2023 AT 6.30 PM.

Pursuant to the requirements of Section 47 of the Local Government and Elections Wales) Act 2021, the meeting was held remotely.

In attendance:

Councillors: Cllr. N. Matthews (In the Chair) A. Beavan, I. Parfitt, L. Cowles, A. Jones, T. Porter, L. Cowles, M. Wheeler.

Officers: Kevin Warren (Chief Officer)

Visitors: None present.

Members of public: Ashleigh Taylor (Hwb Torfaen)

The Extraordinary meeting was opened at 6:30pm by the Mayor Cllr Nathan Matthews who welcomed everyone and expressed thanks for attendance.

1. To receive any questions from the public.

None received.

2. To receive and accept apologies.

The Chief Officer informed the chairperson that the following apologies had been received.

- Cllr Keen – Pre arranged trip.
- Cllr Harris – Work commitment.
- Cllr Hunt – IT problems.
- Cllr James – Childcare.

It was proposed by Cllr Beavan and seconded by Cllr Cowles that the apologies be accepted.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Apologies accepted.

3. Declarations of Interest

- Cllr Matthews – Personal – items 4 and 5. Member of the Healthy Blaenavon Strategic Partnership.
- Cllr Cowles – Personal – items 4 and 5. TCBC Borough Councillor.

Resolved: Declarations of interest noted by members.

4. To receive a presentation from Ashleigh Taylor (Hwb Torfaen) concerning the proposed 'Windows to Positivity' project.

Ashleigh introduced herself to members and provided them with a brief overview of her role within Hwb Torfaen, but this evening's presentation was on behalf of the Healthy Blaenavon Partnership.

Ashleigh shared with members the presentation relating to the 'Windows to Positivity Project' and proceeded to provide an overview of its content including the role of the Healthy Blaenavon Partnership, together with the key organisations that formed this group.

The focus of the project was to provide positive community connections within Blaenavon, and this was broken down into the following areas.

- Aims of the project.
- Project objectives.
- Overview of the 'Windows to Positivity'
- Digital Charter.
- Wellbeing Friends.
- Outputs and Outcomes.
- Budget and Costs.

The cost of the project would be £25k with a financial contribution from the Town Council being £1,500. A full breakdown of the costs was then explained and how the project would be managed which involved several organisations.

Ashleigh requested if there were any questions from members?

Cllr Beavan requested clarity regarding the perception of negativity, and was surprised that this was a priority as personally she had not witnessed this within the community, also what was the evidence base to support negativity?

Cllr Beavan explained further that in her experience certainly over the past twelve months, the perception within Blaenavon was really positive.

Ashleigh explained that she has over emphasised the negativity element, but the idea was to promote positivity and positive action to encourage individuals to engage in positive action and neighbourliness.

Ashleigh continued and provided a summary of the overarching considerations that were taken into account when the project was envisaged together with the discussions that took place from organisations within the partnership group which supported the project.

Cllr Beavan thanked Ashleigh for her explanation.

The Chief Officer queried with Ashleigh the information contained within slide three relating to workshops for example twelve, but the other slides mention thirteen could this be clarified?

Ashleigh confirmed that there will probably be thirteen which would include an event launch.

The Chief Officer raised the point about partner contributions to the project, explaining that there are twelve partners within the partnership group and only four partners were actually contributing to the project. What was TCBC's contribution?

Ashleigh explained that their contribution related to the time to run the wellbeing friends.

The Chief Officer asked about the Health Board's contribution and had the £1,200 been confirmed?

Ashleigh explained that this had been verbally confirmed, but to date, has not received any written confirmation. In relation to contributions from other partners, verbal confirmations have been received in principle, and this is likely to come through.

An application has been submitted to Bronafon and conversations with the Health Board have indicated an increased contribution from the original figure but nothing in writing at this stage.

The funding bid has been completed and will be submitted when all of the written confirmations have been received. The match funding from partners strengthens the bid, but this can still be submitted without confirmation of match funding.

The Chief Officer clarified with Ashleigh who was the artist?

Ashleigh explained that the artist was in fact a member of her staff and this individual was a qualified art teacher and this person would be delivering the project.

The Chief Officer clarified with Ashleigh the costs relating to the artist namely £5,500?

Ashleigh explained that the cost of the artist was around £3k - £4k and checked the budget figures for accuracy. It was confirmed that the cost was £3,500.

The Chief Officer queried with Ashleigh the costs relating to volunteers' expenses which had been recorded as £2k and what did the cost actually cover?

Ashleigh explained that the volunteer cost would cover the following.

- Transport costs namely bus fares, petrol costs.
- Food and Drink.
- Childcare Costs.

It was difficult to provide an exact figure, but the figure was generic and would be for more than just tea or coffee.

The Chief Officer queried the second figure in relation to volunteer expenses namely £2,525 and enquired how this figure had been calculated?

Ashleigh explained that the figure was based on the WCVA hourly rate for non-skilled volunteers which was currently £8.75 / hour.

This would be calculated as twenty volunteers multiplied by six sessions multiplied by 3 hours multiplied by £8.75 but was not able to provide exact details. Ashleigh confirmed that these were the calculations that are used to reach the cost figure.

The Chief Officer clarified that the total figure for volunteers based on the calculations would be around £4,550?

Ashleigh explained that the volunteer figure of £2,525 is their time contributed and this is what it would cost to pay the volunteers and not cash that would be received in order to pay volunteers. In short, the actual figure being spent on volunteers directly would be £2k.

The Chief Officer clarified the figures in terms of salary and explained that from his calculations the salary would be £10,920. Could Ashleigh explain how the figure of £13k was calculated.

Ashleigh explained that the £13k salary cost would be based on most likely a proportion of staff costs allocated which were split between Ashleigh, and the hours paid by staff used to support Ashleigh.

Ashleigh outlined some calculations but was unable to explain the figure of £13k. Ashleigh stated that she would clarify the figure and email them to the Chief Officer when available and this would cover several members of staff who will be running the project.

Ashleigh then confirmed that she had located the figures, and the costs would be for a casual member of staff at £12 / hour which would cover the physical hours of the sessions / workshops.

The Chief Officer thanked Ashleigh for her input.

Cllr Jones asked how was the project going to help the community as a lot of them are not using social media?

Ashleigh explained that the people who were not on line would be targeted via the physical window and wellbeing friends but clarified that approx 60% of Blaenavon residents if not more, were online.

Cllrs Jones felt that in his view this was not going to work and shared concerns regarding the overall cost of the project in relation to what the project was trying to achieve.

Ashleigh provided an explanation regarding the costs over the project life span namely 18 months, aligned to the outcomes, so a contribution of £1,500 was value for money.

Cllr Beavan referred to outputs and outcomes and raised a point that some of the outcomes are not really quantifiable based on the figures used within the project. How is this going to be measured because the figures presented are not quantified outcomes and in fact are very soft outcomes.

Ashleigh explained that soft outcomes are just as important as the hard physical outputs and these can be measured in a variety of ways namely direct canvassing and self-reporting, periodic evaluation, and also positive reporting on line by residents indicating that residents are getting involved.

Polls and surveys will also be conducted, and this can measure how people are getting involved. The wellbeing measurement can be established from self-reporting.

Also, the use of case studies can be used as a measurement based on qualitative data to identify impact. Evaluation will be critical to the success of the project.

Cllr Beavan asked if a similar project been carried out with positive outcomes elsewhere? Ashleigh confirmed from her personal knowledge she was not aware of a project similar to this one.

Cllr Beavan queried in relation to individual elements of the project being led by different organisations and how is this going to be co-ordinated?

Ashleigh confirmed that the co-ordination will be conducted monthly via the Healthy Blaenavon partnership board who will receive reports from the Hwb.

Cllr Matthews asked members if there were any further questions for Ashleigh. No further questions were raised. Cllr Matthews thanked Ashleigh for her detailed presentation.

Ashleigh then left the meeting.

Resolved: Members noted the presentation.

5.To discuss and make any relevant determinations concerning match funding of the proposed 'Windows to Positivity' project.

Cllr Matthews asked members if they had any comments to make regarding the presentation from Ashleigh Taylor?

Cllr Parfitt raised concerns regarding the value for money element and was not convinced that the project costing £20k could be value for money.

Cllr Cowles agreed with the points raised by Cllr Parfitt regarding value for money, but also has concerns based on the questions raised by the Chief Officer. As an example, will this be the final project as per the presentation if the match funding is not confirmed.

There is no clarity what the Council will get from their contribution. The project should have come to the Council last taking into account that the Council are the protectors of the public purse and the fact that other match funding has not been confirmed.

Cllr Cowles felt that based on the information presented, the risks to the Council are high and therefore would not be comfortable in supporting the project and authorising match funding of £1,500, knowing that there is no confirmation that other match funding will come into fruition.

Cllr Cowles stated that he would not be supporting the project.

Cllr Jones agreed with the views presented by Cllr Cowles and felt that the project would not work. Therefore did not support the contribution of £1,500.

Cllr Matthews outlined to members the project cost of £25,562 in relation to the tangible objectives namely thirteen workshops and twenty participants creating window displays over an 18 month period seemed an extremely expensive project in relation to the outcomes.

Cllr Matthews agreed with Cllr Beavan in relation to outcomes in that they are very intangible and are difficult to measure. How can this be quantified and has this had any meaningful impact? The project was based on assumptions focusing on negativity and as a result he shares similar concerns.

Cllr Wheeler stated that the project was literally 'pie in the sky' and in his view a waste of time.

Cllr Matthews requested from members if there were any proposals in relation to the project?

It was proposed by Cllr Jones and seconded by Cllr Cowles that the match funding request of £1,500 is not supported.

All members in agreement.

Meeting ended at 19:15 hrs.

Signed Chairman: *W. Matthew*

Date: 24/1/24.

