

CALDICOT TOWN COUNCIL
Report of Town Clerk

FULL TOWN COUNCIL 25th APRIL 2018

1. CORRESPONDENCE – ONE VOICE WALES

1.1. National Awards 2018 – Winners, Highly Commended and Commended

9.4.18

Following on from the success of the inaugural One Voice Wales Innovative Practice National Awards Scheme 2017 we ran the Awards Scheme again for 2018. This year we received 44 applications from 23 Community and Town Councils and the quality of entries was very high indeed. These awards are an opportunity for Councils to showcase the services it provides for its community and an opportunity for Councillors, Clerks and staff to receive the recognition they deserve.

A judging panel containing members of staff from the WLGA, Office of the Sustainable Futures Commissioner, Co-pro Cymru Network, CADW, Children's Commissioner for Wales and WCVA/Participation Cymru decided on the winners, those highly commended and commended.

This year we held our first stand alone National Innovative Practice Awards Conference on 29th March 2018 at the Hafod y Hendre Building at the Royal Welsh Showground where workshops were run by shortlisted councils under ten different categories. There were 107 delegates, guests and stakeholder organisations present at what proved to be a very successful day starting with a great speech from Cllr Debbie Wilcox Leader of the WLGA.

I am delighted to inform member councils of the winners, highly commended and commended Councils for the One Voice Wales Innovative Practice National Awards 2018 below:

Category	Winner	Highly Commended	Commended
Best Annual Report	Barry TC	Blaenavon TC	Borth CC Caldicot TC Carmarthen TC Risca TC
Best Environmental Project	Carmarthen TC	Monmouth TC	Barry TC Pontardawe TC
Best Website	New Radnor CC	Cwmbran CC	Caldicot TC Tregear TC
Best Community Engagement	Llanelli TC	Carmarthen TC Cwmbran CC Llanwenog CC Llandough CC	Gorseinon TC Higher Kinnerton CC Newtown and Llanwchaearn TC Pontardawe TC
Best Tourism	Pembrey & Burry Port TC	Monmouth TC New Radnor CC	Barry TC
Best Sustainability	Carmarthen TC	Old Radnor CC	
Best Youth Engagement	Monmouth TC	Barry TC	Gorseinon TC Llanelli TC
Best Heritage	Carmarthen TC	Newtown TC	Pembrey & Burry Port TC
Best Devolution of Services	Tregaron TC	Pencoed TC	
Best Local Council	Barry TC AND Llanelli TC		Carmarthen CC Trefeglwys CC

We are currently in the process of writing up a Post Conference report which will provide details of the winner, highly commended and commended councils entries as case studies and will enable fellow member councils to learn from the work of other councils across Wales and hopefully encourage new projects and programmes in their own areas. Additionally the Post Conference Report will be used as an evidence base to inform Welsh Government, Unitary Authorities, the Third Sector and other key partners of the good work local councils are doing in their communities across Wales and how they can possibly support the work of the local council sector in the future.

We are in the process of collating pictures of the councils receiving their prizes and will be distributing them out as soon as we receive them from our photographer. Naturally we would encourage those councils who have received recognition through the National Awards scheme to promote this through local media wherever possible - for too long the sector hasn't shouted loudly and proudly about the great work it does for communities and this is a great opportunity not to be missed.

May I take this opportunity to once again thank all those councils who took part in this year's scheme and offer again my congratulations to you all - you are all a credit to the community and town council sector.

I'm looking forward to the One Voice Wales National Innovative Practice Awards 2019 already!

1.2 Report from Age Cymru 'Showcasing tackling loneliness' 6.4.18

'I'm pleased to attach the report that Age Cymru has collated entitled 'Showcasing tackling loneliness' which is based on the responses that we received from stakeholders who provided us with an update on their work to tackle loneliness. We distributed paper copies of this report at the Roundtable.'

Appendix 1

1.3 Joint One Voice Wales/SLCC Joint Event – 16 May 2018 28.3.18

'One Voice Wales and the SLCC are arranging the sixth Joint Event to be held on 16 May, 2018 in the Metropole Hotel, Llandrindod Wells and your Clerk may have already seen information about the event in the Clerk magazine or on the SLCC website. Bookings will need to be made by accessing the following

web-link

www.slcc.co.uk/ovw

This Event is a very important one for Councils given that it focuses on key topic areas such as the review of local councils being undertaken by the Independent Review Panel; financial governance and accountability; devolution of services and general data protection regulations/cyber security. The importance of these matters cannot be over-stated and the event presents a highly important opportunity for Councils to be at the forefront of current issues and opportunities now available to our sector. It is open for Councillors and Clerks to attend.

Along with myself and the Chair of One Voice Wales as well as our counterparts from the Society of Local Council Clerks, we will be joined by some excellent presenters who will be addressing the event. There are also workshop type sessions during the afternoon period focusing on devolution of services and community assets; GDPR and cyber security.

The cost of the event is very reasonable to ensure that Councils whether large or small can afford to take part and I am really hopeful that the event is fully supported by Councils in Wales and especially those in the South and Mid Wales area.

Previous joint events were all resounding successes and with your support I am hopeful that this success will be replicated this year. The agenda for the event which remains subject to change is attached for your information.

In conclusion, I would encourage your Council to take up this opportunity and subscribe to the Event and I look forward to seeing a full house in Llandrindod Wells on 16 May, 2018.'

1.4 Review of Community and Town Council Sector in Wales – Response to the Independent Review Panel March 2018 3.4.18

'Please find attached the One Voice Wales response to the Community and Town Council Review.'

Appendix 2

1.5 Betsi Cadwaladr Stakeholder Reference Group meeting – 19th January 2018

26.3.18

*'Hearing Loss Update - John Day, Head of Audiology Services, outlined the National Plan for Hearing Loss. At risk of sounding alarmist, the core message of the presentation was this: - **HEARING LOSS CAN LEAD TO DEMENTIA.** Evidence indicates that those suffering from mild hearing loss are twice as likely to develop dementia as those who aren't. The reason is related to 'cognitive decline' where the individual begins to lack the same level of understanding and/or recognition that he or she once had. However and as hearing loss tends to be gradual, not everyone realises they may be suffering from it unlike, say, sight deterioration.*

Under the new procedure, individuals will be able to refer themselves directly to an audiology clinic instead of requiring a referral from their GP. The hope is that by not having to go see the doctor, more people will have regular hearing assessments which may well result in fewer individuals suffering from dementia in later life. We did raise the possibilities of rudimentary hearing tests being carried out by pharmacists and district nurses such that an individual may be referred on to an audiology clinician for treatment.

The message is quite simple; even if you don't think your hearing has deteriorated over the years, which it probably has, it would be a good idea to get it checked out. A fairly simple assessment could lead to a much better quality of life in later years.

***Patient Advice and Support Service (PASS)** - presented by Maggie Pearce, the Patient Experience Manager for Ysbyty Glan Clwyd, this is a relatively new initiative designed to engage with and support patients during their period of hospitalisation. The service is currently operating at Glan Clwyd only but there is every likelihood that there will be similar units based at Ysbyty Gwynedd and the Maelor within the near future.*

The staff themselves are employees of the Health Trust but they endeavour to be 'on the side of' the patient rather than the Trust in resolving causes for complaint. So far, the service appears to be having considerable success although there remains an issue surrounding how open and honest patients might be particularly in cases involving long term and/or multiple treatments.

***Three Year Plan 2018 - 2021** - Geoff Lang, Executive Director of Strategy, presented the draft Three Year Plan for the Board. Not surprisingly, there is nothing which is significantly new within the draft. The main focus is on improving upon that which already exists.*

***SRG Annual Report 2017 - 2018** - the Group also discussed a draft copy of the as yet confidential Annual Report of the work it has undertaken during the last twelve months. Much of what is contained within that report has been covered in my bulletins to you following each meeting. However, it also contains a member attendance schedule. Ever since the Stakeholder Reference Group was established, concerns have been expressed about the varying levels of attendance of some members and organisations. By way of example, each of the six Unitary Authorities across North Wales is entitled to send a full member representative to each of the six meetings within the annual cycle. The members from Flintshire and Gwynedd Councils have not attended any in 2017/2018. Apart from the member for Denbighshire, the other three representatives haven't managed more than two meetings.*

It has to be said that this paucity of attendance is not restricted to Local Authority members. In any event, details are likely to be circulated with my next report following the May meeting which is scheduled to take place on 14th May.'

2. CORRESPONDENCE - MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

2.1 Response to Issues

An update log has been created, showing responses and progress.

Appendix 3

2.2 CCTV

'Please find attached CCTV Reports for March 2018'

13.4.18

Appendix 4

2.3 Caldicot Area Town and Community Council cluster meetings 11.4.18

'Please note that the dates for the Caldicot area town and community council cluster meetings for the next year have been set as follows:

21st May 2018

12th September 2018

31st January 2019

All meetings will begin at 6pm and will be held in Caldicot Community Hub (library). As a reminder, the purpose of the cluster is to provide a forum for the county, town and community councils to connect with one another on matters of strategic importance and mutual interest.

Thank you to you and your members for the commitment that you have shown to working in partnership through the clusters and I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible represented at our next meeting on 21st May. If you have any items that you would like to discuss at this meeting please do let me know.'

3. CORRESPONDENCE - OTHER

3.1 Have a Field Day – celebrate our parks and green spaces on 7th July 13.4.18

'Now Easter is over we begin to look forward to the summer and more opportunities for being outdoors in our parks and green spaces.

At Fields in Trust we are planning for the 2018 "Have a Field Day" celebration of the UK's parks and green spaces on the first Saturday in July. Registration is open now - join-in and sign-up to show how much you #LoveYourLocalPark.

Over the Easter weekend the 2018 **Have a Field Day** campaign opened for registrations. We're encouraging people to celebrate their local parks and green spaces by having a party or a picnic with friends and neighbours. Have a Field Day this year will be **Saturday 7th July**. You don't have to hold a big event to take part and if you register your event online we will make available a selection of downloadable content and a small flat pack of materials to help you organise and enjoy "Have a Field Day"

3.2 Chris Jones Regeneration - Caldicot Town Centre Stakeholder Workshop 3.4.18

'Please see note of the last stakeholder meeting we held in March'

Appendix 5

3.3 Living Levels Project Spring Newsletter 13.4.18

'Please find attached the first edition of the newsletter for the Living Levels HLF project for the Gwent Levels. I would be extremely grateful if you could distribute how you see fit and it would be great if you could upload to your council website too if possible please!

*You may also be interested in a short film to remind you about the project and the Gwent Levels:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=riQJHxZoLm8>*

In accordance with new Data Protection rules due at the end of May 2018:

Living Levels would love to send you future editions of the newsletter and let you know about our volunteering opportunities, events and training courses. If you're happy for us to email you this information then please email info@livinglevels.org.uk.

If you no longer wish to receive email marketing from us, it's easy to do. Please e-mail info@livinglevels.org.uk. If you would like to know more about your data protection rights please see our [privacy policy](#).'

Appendix 6

3.4 Caldicot Foodbank/Multi Agency Meeting 3.4.18

'Department for Work and Pensions offered to come and speak with us at 12 Noon on Friday 15 June, at Caldicot Town Council Offices. The talk will last about half an hour and will provide you with essential information about the roll-out of Universal Credit in this area. Please also note that Councillors will be welcome to join us.'

3. SUBSCRIPTIONS and PUBLICATIONS

To note Subscriptions and Publications - available Town Council Office:

- **One Voice Wales Bulletin – March 2018 28.3.18**
- **One Voice Wales Larger Local Councils Committee - Agenda 18.4.18/Minutes 24.01.18**
- **One Voice Wales Monmouth/Newport Area Committee – Agenda 19.4.18/Minutes 18.1.18**
- **WCVA Newsletter**

*For further information please contact Caldicot Town Council
Telephone: 01291 420441 Email: towncouncil@caldicottc.org.uk*

Showcasing different approaches to tackling loneliness across Wales

Introduction

In June 2017, Age Cymru facilitated a 'Roundtable on loneliness' hosted by Jayne Bryant AM. Age Cymru invited a range of organisations to the event, which provided an opportunity to debate and highlight different solutions for tackling loneliness and to commit to continuing to work together to ensure Wales has compassionate communities.

During the event, attendees shared examples of projects that have been successful in tackling loneliness. The projects demonstrated the different ways that third sector organisations, statutory services and citizens can work together to reach isolated older people and create social networks that reduce levels of loneliness.

Following the event, Age Cymru produced a report¹ which provided an overview of the Roundtable discussions and highlighted some examples of good practice. We are keen to monitor the impact of the Roundtable event, and as a follow-up we invited participants and other stakeholders to contact us about their work to tackle loneliness and we asked whether the report had inspired any new initiatives, conversations or raised awareness of loneliness in their area of work. The responses we received are collated below.

National Federation of Women's Institutes (NFWI)

At the NFWI's Annual Meeting in June a resolution was passed on 'Alleviating Loneliness' which 'calls on every WI and the NFWI to work alongside health and social care providers and their local communities to raise awareness of the causes and impacts of loneliness, thus ensuring better identification of lonely people in order to be able to offer them the appropriate support and assistance'. The NFWI has been encouraging their members to write to their Public Services Board and Local Health Board about loneliness. Over the summer the NFWI launched a short survey to gather views on how loneliness could be tackled. WI members shared their personal experiences, existing projects and activities as well as innovative ideas for further action. They are currently looking at how they might spread good practice more widely.

NFWI's 'Link Together to alleviate loneliness' campaign action pack is available as a separate attachment.

¹ Age Cymru (2017) Loneliness Roundtable.

Anglesey

Anglesey County Council have many initiatives and services that contribute towards reducing loneliness and isolation. A brief summary is provided below – their full account with a case study is given in Appendix 1.

The council have adopted the Local Asset Co-ordination approach which works alongside the social prescribing model and is having a positive effect on individuals' wellbeing outcomes and tackling loneliness and isolation.

Loneliness and Isolation is one of the five main themes in the Ageing Well in Wales programme. There is a dedicated Loneliness and Isolation planning group chaired by Age Cymru Gwynedd a Môn with membership from statutory, third sector and community groups. An agreed action plan is reviewed on an annual basis.

Community hubs

The local authority is developing a community hub model across the island. The model involves identifying community assets, community priorities and learning, volunteering and inclusion opportunities. There are currently 9 hubs including Agewell Hwyllog Môn Social Enterprise. Venues range from village halls, public house, Extra Care and Sheltered Housing schemes.

Gwelfor Community Centre

The hub has been well used for various activities, eg Citizens Advice (CAB) sessions including energy awareness; County Council meetings with residents; information sessions on grant funding with Medrwn Môn; IT classes; lunch/social club; gentle exercise class.

Transport

Access to community activities and services can be a major barrier for individuals. Accessible public and community transport is vitally important in tackling loneliness and isolation. There is a well established car link service managed by Medrwn Môn (CVC), and a well established Good Turn Schemes. These are volunteer led schemes that receive referrals from the community for transport to GP/hospital appointments and activities within the community. The local authority has supported two large social enterprises to purchase minibuses, which contributes to the community taking more control and finding local solutions for individuals. The Council has commissioned Age Cymru Gwynedd a Môn to establish further Good Turn Schemes in Holyhead.

Linc Cymunedol Môn

Linc Cymunedol Môn is an Anglesey-based Single Point of Access (SPOA) based in Medrwn Môn (CVC). It provides a dedicated phone line regarding third sector organisations that can provide support and information through community based activities and services.

Referrals are received by the SPOA team, health board staff including GPs, district nurses, occupational therapists, social workers, etc.

Housing

Adult services are working with the Housing Department to develop a Very Sheltered Housing Scheme. Improved internal and external facilities to increase accessibility and ease movement within people's homes can contribute to improved wellbeing outcomes for individuals.

Project evaluation

Discussions are being held with the Wales School for Social Care Research in Bangor regarding evaluating projects that effect reducing loneliness, to inform future development and planning of services.

Cardiff

An update was provided by Cardiff Council:

1. Support to older people and community groups to develop and deliver local solutions that counteract loneliness

Cardiff Council has developed a model of day services for older people, ranging from facilitating access to universal services, to specialist intervention. The Day Opportunities Team (within Preventative Services) includes working with people who are over 60 and are socially isolated. A vital member of this team is the community coordinator. The team identify solutions to tackle an individual's feelings of isolation, such as a lunch club, walking football, volunteering, visiting the local shop. The team is working with the Lisvane community council group to facilitate a luncheon club. Last September one of the previously Council grant funded luncheon clubs was transferred over to the organisation running the club as a Capital Asset Transfer.

2. Work with communities across the generations to foster informal structures that enable people to participate in society on their own terms

Preventative Services, in partnership with Cardiff City Foundation, facilitated an intergenerational literacy project. Children from 4 local primary schools and a group of older people were invited to an event at Cardiff City stadium to share memories of Cardiff City FC, the city itself, and their sporting memories.

The community coordinator is engaging with older people's community groups such as 'remembrance monthly' who are interested in sharing their knowledge with the younger generation.

The schools service in Cardiff has initiated a 6 week programme of nursery children visiting one of the day centres, with teaching staff taking craft materials and paints for older people and children to work together. Parents of some of the children are also attending with their babies, creating a wonderful atmosphere within the centre during those sessions.

3. Consider innovative ways to support community groups by encouraging the use of Council facilities

The Council facilitates the use of one of their day centres for occasional community events for older people on Saturdays, and they are in discussion with a newly established local history group for older people. As part of the Housing Communities Directorate, Preventative Services are working in partnership with the local HUBs to

facilitate 'Well-being Wednesdays' for older people with activities such as games, fitness classes, craft groups and alternative therapies as well as gardening groups.

4. Work with the third sector to explore different models of funding luncheon clubs to allow these valuable community groups to be established on a sustainable basis across Wales

One of the aims of the Council's Day Opportunities Strategy is for all luncheon clubs to become self-sustaining. This includes supporting the luncheon clubs to become financially sustainable community resources for older people.

5. Ensure that initiatives that tackle loneliness are sustainable and develop robust mechanisms for programme evaluation

The Healthy and Active Partnership Service is preventative in nature and the efficacy of the project is demonstrated by the effect it has on loneliness and isolation of its users. To capture measurable outcomes, the project utilises the 'Campaign to End Loneliness Measurement Tool'. The tool questionnaire is used when an individual is first assigned to a volunteer and then regularly throughout the period of contact.

6. Encourage social housing and residential care providers to open their activities to work with the wider community

A refurbished Cardiff Council sheltered living scheme is being developed to encourage the use of the scheme facilities by individuals and community groups for the potential mutual benefit of the scheme tenants and wider community. This approach is also being encouraged at other sheltered housing schemes and within extra care schemes.

Ceredigion

Within the Penparc Ward there are two 'Arts 4 Wellbeing' community groups in Ferwig and Llechryd which are very popular and meet regularly; it is hoped that these will eventually be self-maintained.

In Cardigan, the town council reversed the decision by the County Council to close the town centre toilets by handing over the management of the facilities to a local Social Enterprise namely 4CG, thus providing a much needed facility in the town.

Flintshire

Daniel Owen Community Association, Mold South

At Christmas the Daniel Owen Community Association put on several community activities.

Monmouthshire

Goetre Fawr Community Council

The local village hall hosts a number of activities, and those that are particularly well attended and enjoyed by older people in the community include:

- craft class (weekly)
- Bingo and social occasion (two evenings a week)
- 'scrap book club' (monthly)
- bowls club (twice a week).

Transport

The Community Council is also exploring opportunities to support a car scheme in liaison with the Bridges Community Centre (based in Monmouth) – with the aim of improving access to transport and is likely to benefit older people and help facilitate their ability to mix with others and their attendance at social events.

Shirenewton Community Council

Shirenewton is a rural community that hosts a number of activities at various venues in the community. The U3A has art classes in the Church Room; there is a Bridge club in a local pub; there are at least three book clubs, an unofficial walking club, and there is a very popular pantomime group (Shirenewton Operatic and Dramatic Society). A monthly Village Market is held in the Recreation Hall, with stall holders selling local products and crafts.

The local primary school has initiated coffee and cake afternoons to reach out to older people; the Community Council has arranged a monthly lunch club with a local pub; and the Methodist Church in Chepstow with Churches Together organises freshly cooked meals weekly for older people.

St Thomas a Beckett Church has a network of parish visitors who provide regular visits and support to those older people in the parish who may need some help. They also visit people in care homes in the area.

Transport

St Thomas a Beckett Church Parochial Church Council (PCC) is a member of the Grass Routes community bus service, paying the one-off registration fee for older people in the parish who may need help arranging the service for themselves.

Neath Port Talbot

In Neath Port Talbot there is much work going on through the statutory and voluntary sectors to combat loneliness and isolation. Such action includes the following, but this is a brief overview:

- The work of the Local Area Co-ordinators, a joint project between the Local Authority and the Health Service, which supports people by working in partnership with individuals, families and local community organisations.
- Various projects and support through the Neath Port Talbot Council for Voluntary Services, which target individuals and encourages people to volunteer to help those who may be facing loneliness and isolation.
- A whole host of activity throughout the County Borough, which includes the voluntary sector, people from the community ensuring that libraries and other facilities do not close, community activity and adult education.

The Neath Port Talbot Public Services Board is making one of their priorities the wellbeing of older people. They have a working group looking into the direct issues of isolation and loneliness, but they also recognise that the other priority areas such as Age and Dementia Friendly Communities, work to prevent falls, improving access to learning, employment and volunteering, addressing poverty, and combating crime that targets older people also have an impact upon a sense of isolation and loneliness.

The Public Services Board (PSB) Wellbeing Plan is being produced in May 2018, where it is anticipated that there will be actions to address the issues identified above that affect older people.

Glyncorrwg

There are coffee mornings for people who live alone in the community to promote socialising in the community and encourage people who live alone to get out and about.

Newport

A volunteer of the Ffrind i Mi initiative (a befriending service developed under the auspices of the Aneurin Bevan Health Board) is developing this scheme to put befriending services in place as a way of combatting loneliness. There is also a weekly Friendship group at Maindee library in Newport.

Pembrokeshire

Solva

Solva Care is a not for profit social initiative set up by Solva Community Council. It is a community based project focusing on social care, and one of its aims is 'offering a way to counteract loneliness, isolation and social disadvantage'.

Further information: <https://solvacare.co.uk/>

Powys

Caersws

Caersws Community Council confirmed that there are a number of groups and organisations which run regular sessions within the community. There are two WI groups within the Caersws/Llanwnnog wards, Friendship Hour group in Caersws as well as things like toddler groups, archery, pilates, yoga and others which all help bring the community together and help tackle the issue of loneliness within the community.

St John Ward, Brecon

There is an over 50s lunch club every week at the St John's Centre which gives people access to social interaction, live music and food. The local library runs a 'Knit and Natter' session, and there is the Brecon Dementia Friendly Support.

Further information:

http://www.matthewdorrance.com/lunch_club

http://www.matthewdorrance.com/knit_natter

[https://d3n8a8pro7vnm.cloudfront.net/dementiafriendlybrecon/pages/42/attachments/original/1422801286/TeaChatActivitiesBrecon_\(2\).pdf?1422801286](https://d3n8a8pro7vnm.cloudfront.net/dementiafriendlybrecon/pages/42/attachments/original/1422801286/TeaChatActivitiesBrecon_(2).pdf?1422801286)

Rhondda Cynon Taf

Loneliness and isolation was an issue that RCT identified as a challenge for their communities when completing the Wellbeing and Population assessments last year.

RCT is working to develop a model of support to build community resilience and help people make connections across their community and they hope to see this work progress over the next 12 months. In the meantime there are a number of local projects, including Café 50 in Pontydlun, that have been commissioned in partnership with others that are having a positive impact.

One particular service has been the Community Co-ordinators (CC). Based in the local areas and employed by the CVCs, these co-ordinators provide information, advice and signpost to local community groups, activities and services. They also:

- build strong partnerships with communities, agencies and services to support 50+;
- support people to live their own lives within their communities;
- raise community and statutory awareness of voluntary sector services.

To illustrate the community co-ordinators role in tackling loneliness and isolation, a case study that shows an example of what they can do on a 1:1 basis is included in Appendix 2 (Tackling loneliness and isolation in Cwm Taf). An example of the Community Coordinator monthly bulletin, which publicises what is going on in the local area for older people to access, is available as a separate attachment.

Other services that they commission in partnership include the following which are set out in the links below. These short digital stories are very powerful examples of both the impact of loneliness and isolation for older people and also the benefit of informal support and have been used to raise awareness in the region.

Digital stories:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k-xJ9Mmrbxl>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F5VM6V2b2-k>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sdMt9WLIcplk>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2_CvCFJhoM

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KCEJGKARuko&t=25s>

Pontypridd

The Town Council has launched 'Dementia Friendly Pontypridd' which involves many groups and local businesses, and includes the University of South Wales, Glyntaf nursing school and Arriva Trains, and key engagement with the Alzheimer's Society.

There is a Home Stories initiative based in Courthouse Street, which is a pilot arts outreach project aimed at older people in Pontypridd. It aims to get residents talking

about objects and memories important to them and creating stories and poems about those objects and memories. There is also the YMCA memories exhibition.

Swansea

The Hill Community Development Trust in Swansea and the multi-award winning Phoenix Centre provide light touch, low and no cost opportunities for people to meet and chat with others. The community café is often vibrant with widows and widowers who love getting out of the house for an hour every day. The library still has an excellent knitting club. The Older People's Information Centre (TOPIC) was set up after Swansea City and Council allowed two empty properties to be run by a voluntary management committee for the benefit of older residents. Swansea has many community facilities run along similar lines. It was emphasised that these initiatives do not always entail the investment of large sums of money.

Another Councillor from Swansea informed us about setting up 'dance to health' within ABMU with older people being identified by their Local Area Coordinators. Falls prevention is another area within their Wellbeing agenda.

Torfaen

Croesyceiliog North

Croesyceiliog North arranged a Christmas get together for older residents in the ward with tea and cake and a local nursery visited to sing songs.

Hosted a recent tea and cake event in a local pub to raise funds for the mental health foundation. It was felt that this was attended by people who were able to get out and about so loneliness may not be so much of an issue, although every opportunity to get out helps.

Exploring the possibility to work with youth services to arrange volunteer visits for older people that are lonely.

Wrexham

Ceiriog Valley

Ceiriog Valley has a Community Agent in Glyn Ceiriog (Glyntraian Community Council have advertised the post) who has held awareness days involving 'Ymestyn' (a befriending service) and dementia awareness with a local shop.

The Valley has a number of self-employed carers who look out for older and vulnerable people and help them out in times of need. Consideration was given to setting up a list of vulnerable people but there were implications regarding data protection.

There is a Christian Centre where volunteers run a café and drop in centre, and which also holds a weekly lunch club (lunches are cooked by Leonard Cheshire). Weekly coffee mornings take place at a local hall in Dolywern which is run by volunteers, and Leonard Cheshire residents are encouraged to attend.

Chirk

Chirk has employed a Community Agent who works with those over 55. A monthly get together is held in the local community centre offering entertainment, and there is always someone to talk to and things to do with food and good company.

Mark John-Williams (provides freelance training and consultancy)

Mark has recently begun some work linking with a co-produced Big Lottery project, called 'Connected Generation', in Powys. It is led by Ceredu, the Carers Organisation and Age Cymru Powys are one of the partners. Mark has delivered training for their new team on person centred practice and circles of support. A key objective for the project is to: "support older people through building on individual strengths, social networks and enriching the relationship between citizens and service providers". For more information on this project, contact Mark on markpcpwilliams@aol.com /07931 244724

Appendices

Appendix 1

Anglesey County Council. Activities and services available on Anglesey.

Loneliness and Isolation is one of the five main themes in the Ageing Well in Wales programme. On a local level, we have incorporated our Strategy for Older People and Ageing Well plan into one document with associated action plans. There is a dedicated Loneliness and Isolation planning group chaired by Age Cymru Gwynedd a Môn with membership from statutory, third sector and community groups. We have an agreed action plan that is reviewed on an annual basis.

We have a number of work streams/projects working to tackle this very important agenda. A short summary is provided below describing some of the projects.

Local Asset Coordination (LAC) is a new model of working with communities and has been developed on Ynys Môn over the past two years. It is a community-based approach encouraging adults and their families to take the lead in developing their own support systems whilst focusing on their strengths and abilities. It is essentially a preventative model, but is now proving beneficial also to those who may already be in receipt of statutory services. Local Asset Coordinators work with individuals and groups to develop and use local networks to promote local solutions to local needs. LACs receive referrals from social workers, GPs and third sector organisations along with self-referrals from the community. A number of referrals have individuals who present and lonely and isolated.

The following case study demonstrates how this model has been successful in improving their wellbeing, and identifies how this model sits comfortably alongside specialist services. They demonstrate how communities can coproduce solutions that improve and develop personal and community wellbeing.

The individuals have provided their own quotes so that this case study is personalised and authentic.

Case Study

Mrs A resides in sheltered accommodation in a remote village and was referred to the Local Asset Coordinator by an Occupational Therapist who works for the Local Authority. She is diagnosed with a life limiting neurological condition, and had been advised to stop driving six months previously. Additional orthopaedic problems meant she now relied on a powered wheelchair for mobility.

The Local Asset Coordinator (LAC) spent time getting to know her – she described her life as becoming increasingly limited; she had little contact with neighbours and was unable to use public transport without assistance. She described herself as becoming “stir crazy within these four walls.” They discussed her previous lifestyle, her interests and what was most important now and for the future. She was able to reflect on the many skills she had gained during a varied and busy life – and the impact of her diagnosis and increasing physical challenges. LAC concentrates on a person’s strengths and the ethos of the contribution each of us can make to others.

When considering this Mrs A's initial reaction was "but what use can I be to anyone? I feel useless." In time, she reflected on the importance she placed on her computer and use of the internet – she is self-taught and very competent. She attended the newly established Community Hub with the Coordinator, who introduced her to others who had shown an interest in learning IT skills. Mrs A spoke of her reliance upon her computer – for shopping, banking and maintaining contact with family who live in England. The Coordinator asked her if she would like to share her skills with others at the Hub – she was motivated by the possibility of helping others - which she now does every Tuesday afternoons.

"I look forward to Tuesdays – before I was a recluse, and I had been feeling this increasingly the previous two years. Tuesday is my special day because I interact with others – and everyone has a story to tell. We all have a worry or problem, but we now feel confident to share these worries, and share our experiences and how we can deal with them. We also share our good and happy news when we have some – and it's important that we can smile and laugh. When I started coming to the Hub, everyone else were either neighbours or community members – now, they are my friends. We have created friendships and circles of support – we also interact on Facebook during the week! It has also helped me become more aware of the needs of others – coming to the Hub has put a smile on my face again. This new model of working is a breath of fresh air to me – I value all the specialist services, but this model is different because it does not assess me, it is less formal and allows me to concentrate on what I am still able to contribute to my community. I have made invaluable connections - and now have two neighbours who visit me most days for a coffee and a chat. I am now trying to get the confidence to use public transport, and my neighbour has offered to come with me for mutual support. I now look forward to using my bus pass!"

Mrs A describes her sense of wellbeing as having "doubled", despite other problems that have arisen recently owing to her diagnosis, which necessitate more hospital visits. "These connections I have made have become circles of support now, and they make it easier to cope with the lows that life throws at us."

Community hubs

The Local Authority is currently working on developing a community hub model across the island. In essence, the model involves working closely with the community to identify community assets, community priorities and learning, volunteering and inclusion opportunities.

Adult services have utilised ICF Capital funding to adapt and provide a conducive environment for older people in existing community assets across the island. The hubs have a formal governance framework and provide a varied programme of activities, information and advice sessions based on the engagement with the community. Access to the hubs is available to all. The social prescribing model via the LAC's and GP provide social prescriptions and refer individuals the hubs. We have established a Community Hub Alliance who meet twice a year. The Alliance discuss joint working opportunities, pooled funding arrangements etc. We request

information such as numbers of individuals attending, activities held and how information and advice is provided within the hub.

Currently we have 9 hubs including the Agewell Hwyllog Môn Social Enterprise. Venues range from village halls, public house, Extra Care and Sheltered Housing schemes.

Gwelfor Community Centre

Refurbishment of new hub – furniture and carpets, laptops, decorating, signage and noticeboards. Since it has been opened the hub has been well used for various activities. CAB have held sessions for members of the community including Energy awareness when people are helped to ensure that they are on the best energy tariff for them, and if not they are helped to change tariffs or supplier.

The hub has been used for meetings with residents by the County Council, it has also been used for an information session re. Grant funding in association with Medrwn Môn.

IT classes have been held. The residents have a list of activities that they would like to be held in the hub and a programme of these is being prepared. A second lunch / social club is being arranged also a gentle exercise class.

The Local Authority is currently working with Agewell Hwyllog Môn Social Enterprise to have a greater presence in one of the Councils' Leisure Centres and the new Extra Care facility currently being built in Llangefni. This adds value to the current facilities by increasing footfall and using the Councils assets to their full potential.

The Supporting People programme have re-modelled the community warden service to provide targeted housing related support to individuals. Building communities / visioning model will strengthen communities, initiatives like befriending, support groups and possible social enterprise opportunities can be developed.

Access to community activities and services can be a major barrier for individuals. Accessible **public and community transport** is vitally important in tackling loneliness and isolation. We have a well -established car link services managed by Medrwn Môn (CVC). We also have well –established Good Turn Schemes on the island. These are volunteer led schemes who receive referrals from the community for transport to GP/hospital appointments and activities within the community. The Local Authority has over the past few years supported two large social enterprises to purchase minibuses, this again contributes to the community taking more control and finding local solutions for individuals. The Council has commissioned Age Cymru Gwynedd a Môn to establish further Good Turn Schemes in Holyhead.

Third sector organisations have also set up Pop Up Cafés across a number of communities. Essentially these are sessions in the community for people to drop in and have a cup of tea. Third sector organisation provide advice and information in an informal manner. These have proved to be successful and we hope to hold more sessions in the New Year.

Linc Cymunedol Môn

Linc Cymunedol Môn is an Anglesey-based Single Point of Access based in Medrwn Môn, the County Voluntary Council (CVC) and has strong working links with its partner organisations throughout the Region.

Linc Cymunedol Môn aims to provide a dedicated phone line that provides information to the people of Anglesey on 3rd sector organisations that can provide support and information to address their low-level needs through community based activities and services to maintain and improve people's wellbeing in their communities.

Referrals are received by the SPOA Team, Health Board staff including GPs, District Nurses, Occupational Therapists, Social Workers etc., 3rd sector organisations, direct contact from individuals through Môn Community Link and contact through Medrwn Môn's phone line. A dedicated phone line has been set up to receive calls from people and colleagues in the Public, Health and 3rd Sectors and is available between 9.00am-4.00pm, Monday to Friday.

Adult services are working jointly with the Housing Department to develop a Very Sheltered Housing Scheme. The funding available through ICF and the Council Housing Support Grant will improve accessibility to the units, external environment and improved communal facilities. Improved internal and external facilities to increase accessibility and ease of movement within people's homes can again contribute to improved wellbeing outcomes for individuals.

We are in discussions with the Wales School for Social Care Research in Bangor to support us in conducting evaluations of a number of projects that effect on reducing loneliness. This will inform future development and planning of services.

Appendix 2

Provided by Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council - tackling loneliness and isolation in Cwm Taf: a case study illustrating the role of a Community Coordinator (CC) in tackling loneliness and isolation.

Case Study

Background:

Mrs T was referred by her GP:

She lives at home with her husband. Over the last few years his mobility has failed and he no longer drives. Mrs T is feeling increasingly isolated at home. She has her church and faith as a great comfort but has had to stop her work as vicar's warden. She has a history of depression, I have briefly discussed your role and she is keen to explore opportunities in the community. Dr M.

What I did:

CC spoke to Mrs T to find out her needs, we discussed several Groups local to her that may be of suitable:

- Treorchy Fifty Plus Forum
- Music and Movement Group
- Fifty Plus Forum Ystrad
- Rhondda Cameo Society
- Canolfan Pentre

For her husband:

Diamond Home Support provides companionship and a respite sitting service. This is a private organisation, many people using their service have commented on how impressed they are with the care received and is also reasonably priced.

Feedback to referrer:

I have spoken to Mrs T on two occasions.

The second conversation was rather upbeat – Mrs T liked several of the suggested groups and their activities and will discuss them with her friend today. Mrs T thinks she will join CAMEO with her friend who is also in her eighties.

I have also registered Mrs T with the Carers Support Network and provided her with information on Silverline a 24 hour support telephone line.

Hopefully things will improve for Mrs T now.

With kind regards and best wishes, CC

What happened next:

Mrs T and 2 of her friends have joined Canolfan Pentre, the Community Centre in Pentre.

'We have such fun! I knew quite a lot of people there when I joined! I have joined the Thursday afternoon group: I needed something that happened every week. We belong to The Oldies Group - such a laugh. Everyone is very nice; we have been out to dinner together, shopping, evenings together. Last week we helped with the community fete: we did some craft work to raise funds. We did a bucket collection for St Peters Church: it is wonderful to see things in the community all joined up. I was 80 yesterday: I keep looking at my card and see the number 80 - I cannot believe I am that old. I don't feel it'.

Thank you so much: I am very pleased! I do not need any more support from you now: but if I think of something I will be in touch.

For further information about this report please contact Ceri Cryer at Age Cymru
ceri.cryer@agecymru.org.uk



The Voice of Community and Town Councils in Wales

Review of Community and Town Council Sector in Wales

Response to the Independent Review Panel

March 2018

Contents

	Page
1. Introduction	2
2. One Voice Wales	2
3. About Community and Town Councils	4
4. Community and Town Councils – a wider role	5
5. The Context of One Voice Wales response	5
6. One Voice Wales Response to the Panel's Questions	13
7. What should community and town councils be responsible for?	13
8. How should they operate?	20
9. What's standing in heir way to deliver for the local community?	24
10. How do councils ensure they best represent their local community?	35
11. Final Comments	39
12. Appendices	40
13. Appendix 1 Consultation events and attendees	40
14. Appendix 2 Capacity and Capability Framework 2016 -2023	44
15. Appendix 3 Bodmin Place Shaping Forum Terms of Reference	48

ONE VOICE WALES

Review of Community and Town Council Sector in Wales

Response to the Independent Review Panel

1. Introduction

This paper represents the formal response of One Voice Wales to the consultation invitation by the Independent Review Panel. It reflects:

- a) The views of member councils of One Voice Wales across Wales, individually and collectively recorded via:
 - discussions in preparation for this response via eight consultation events held across Wales (details of the venues and attendee's are shown in **Appendix 1**)
 - an on-line survey of members of One Voice Wales (to ensure those that were unable to attend the consultation workshops held above had the opportunity to provide comments/ and to allow any further comments for those who attended the eight events to submit further thoughts)
- b) The expert comments based on the experience of members of the One Voice Wales staffing team who were tasked with preparing the response;
- c) A literature review of documents relating to the community and town councils sector reflecting on what has been achieved, the challenges facing the sector in moving forward and the opportunities and actions that can help to mold a positive direction of travel for the sector for the future.

The National Executive Committee of One Voice Wales has considered the draft response and the present paper has been endorsed as the agreed, collective view of One Voice Wales and its member councils.

2. One Voice Wales

One Voice Wales is the national representative organisation for Community and Town Councils throughout Wales. It currently has over 600 councils in membership representing some 82% of all community and town councils in Wales.

Community and Town Councils can and do play a vital role in creating and sustaining a strong sense of community. One Voice Wales believes that community and town councils, as the first tier of government in Wales, are well-placed to ensure the sustainability of community development actions supported by other sectors. One Voice Wales is also mindful of the importance of the Welsh Government's vision for

community involvement in developing public services in Wales. Through promoting local developments, working alongside partners based in or supporting the community, the increased interaction between individuals in the community can engender a positive outlook and feeling of well-being. As the individual communities of Wales develop in this way they will make a significant contribution to the social and economic development of Wales. For this reason the vision subscribed to by One Voice Wales is:

“Working with local councils in Wales to shape the places communities want to live in”

One Voice Wales aims to support Community and Town Councils in achieving this vision and has adopted the following Mission Statement to guide its work:

“To represent the interests of Community and Town Councils; raise awareness and understanding of this primary tier of government; and work collaboratively with our partners to ensure the sector contributes fully to the goal of developing dynamic and sustainable communities in Wales.”

One Voice Wales is committed to working collaboratively with its partner organisations, including member councils, the Welsh Government, the Welsh Local Government Association and the Society of Local Council Clerks. Over the last five years One Voice Wales has increasingly worked with a range of other national and regional organisations and supports the organisations objective of being a collaborative networked body representing the interests of the community and town council sector in Wales.

One Voice Wales view is that we need more local democracy with more empowered people and places. The Independent Panel Review of Community and Town Councils provides an opportunity for politicians of all parties to support our most local, an increasingly important, level of governance. A chance to demonstrate their commitment to citizen-led action, which protects local assets and services and delivers responsive services based on local priorities – all of which improves lives and enhances communities.

This response to the Independent Panel Review sets out our positive offer to Government and creates a new vision of how better services could be delivered with local people. It outlines how we can help the next Government realise its ambitions for community empowerment, co-production and devolution.

This response also should enable the Independent Review Panel to make recommendations to Government across a range of policy ideas that has the ability to unlock the power and potential of communities by helping community and town councils flourish in pursuing better lives for their residents. Our vision is to improve the quality of life for local communities through having vibrant, dynamic and effective community and town councils.

One Voice Wales wants to work with Government to turn this vision into a reality. We agree with SOLACE's¹ (Society of Local Authority Chief Executives) principles for public services reform:

- ✓ **LOCAL SOLUTIONS** have been proven to work most effectively in improving outcomes for communities, achieving greater efficiency and reducing costs.
- ✓ **INTEGRATION** has the potential to improve outcomes, transform services and deliver significant financial savings. It is the long-term priority of local councils across all service areas, and should be for the wider public services.
- ✓ **ACCOUNTABILITY** has to be re-invented in the light of pan-public sector whole-place approaches, and it needs to be comprehensible to the public.
- ✓ **A NEW CONTRACT WITH COMMUNITIES** is needed to restore trust and build a more sustainable, adaptive relationship between local state and citizen.

3. About Community and Town Councils

There are 735 Community and Town Councils in Wales, representing this tier of government closest to the people. They cover approximately 94% of the land area and 70% of the population of Wales. Community and Town Councils are the most local part of our democracy and play an integral role in the functioning of communities in Wales. They provide our neighbourhoods, villages and towns with a democratic voice and a structure for taking action – real people power at grassroots level.

Community and Town Councils are local authorities constituted under the 1972 Local Government Act and range from those serving our smallest rural communities to larger urban councils with populations of tens of thousands. The services delivered by local councils are similarly varied but each seeks to serve its community within its own specific context. Currently this includes undertaking activities such as carrying out community appraisals, developing new or additional services, supporting local voluntary organisations, providing community facilities and influencing those decisions of other organisations that may affect the community.

The communities they serve range from small rural settlements to large towns and their budgets vary accordingly. However, what they all have in common is serving their communities and acting to improve the quality of life in their locality. This is achieved through exercising a range of statutory powers and duties – and much more. Community and Town Councils are responsible to their local electorates for delivering a wide range of services and for the provision and upkeep of local amenities.

Each Council is made up of elected members, or in some cases co-opted members. In Wales there are approximately 8,000 Community and Town Councillors, who represent

¹ OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS : An alternative manifesto (Graeme McDonald© The Solace Group 2014)

the interests of the community they serve as a whole. They are recognised as having a role in providing the voice of the citizen in the development and delivery of public services in Wales.

4. Community and Town Councils – a wider role

Community and Town Councillors are committed to their communities and are an under-valued Wales-wide resource. Through their representative body, One Voice Wales, closer connections need to be made with Welsh Government departments.

In the future there will be an increased expectation on Community and Town Councils' resources by Unitary Authorities, and current arrangements for partnership working between both tiers of local government need to be further enhanced and reflected in joint Charter arrangements that establish a firm foundation for effective working

There is a need to support and build the capacity and skills of community groups to work in partnership with Community and Town Councils as well as raising the general awareness of the powers and responsibilities of this tier of local government. This has already been recognised by Welsh Government and One Voice Wales has worked with government officials to develop a Capacity and Capability Framework for the Community and Town Council sector. (**Appendix 2** provides details of this programme)

Any place-based approach by Welsh Government and its delivery partners should explicitly take account of the role of Community and Town councils and connect them to the local infrastructure and development plans so that they can enhance the effectiveness of locally based approaches and help sustain the continuing benefit of local interventions.

The connections between the local and the national tiers of government require review to ensure that national and

regional approaches can be better understood and effectively sustained at the local level and provide inter-connectivity with the future Public Service Board arrangements.

5. The Context of One Voice Wales response

Before responding to the Panel's four specific questions, we consider it appropriate to preface our comments through reflecting upon current issues which we believe provide a context for our responses.

- The current financial climate

A review undertaken in 2017 on behalf of Wales Public Services 2025 estimates about 56p in every pound spent by ministers on public services could go to health and social services within four years, leaving less money for council-run activities. Consequently, unitary authorities here will need to look hard at new ways of working and at the social impacts of alternative approaches to coping with cuts – and this will inevitably impact on how community and town councils operate in the future.

These conditions provide an opportunity for community and town councils to set out how they see themselves operating in the future for the benefit of their communities and creating a visible identity for themselves within the communities they serve.

However there are some givens:

- Community and Town Councillors are committed to their communities and have been an under-valued Wales-wide resource. The clearest autonomous model of democratic community governance is the community or town council.
- Public agencies need to be more responsive to local needs and closer engagement with Community and Town Councils can assist in creating a greater awareness and understanding of local needs and requirements.
- Community and Town Councils will be expected to take on more responsibilities and this implies a greater need for enhanced relationships with the Unitary Authorities.
- The Well Being of Future Generations Act will mean increased and different duties for Unitary Authorities and Community and Town Councils which will likely create need for policy and strategy to be informed by local knowledge and evidence-based policy making.
- In terms of the introduction of a sustainability duty for the sector, there will be a need for resources to be made available to pump-prime the key strategic activities that will be required to undertake robust community planning and engagement with local electors.
- A fundamental rebalancing of power in favour of local councils and communities will take time to embed itself, and attitudes and capabilities will need time to catch up.
- They also have considerable potential in suburban and inner-city neighbourhoods particularly in the areas of south east Wales where their visibility is least in Wales.
- First tier authorities should be encouraged to collaborate both formally and informally, to foster a culture of joint working and to minimize the risks posed by small councils competing for resources.
- Recognizing the recent Public Sector funding reductions and the resulting austerity / retrenchment within the Welsh Public sector exemplified by:
 - A growing acknowledgement of the need for more effective cross sector working within the Welsh public service – e.g. between Public Service Boards and Community and Town Councils

- A constant “drip feed” of cuts in the levels and quality of many services provided by the principal authorities without the necessary heads up for community and town councils to actively plan to support the retain of pressured services within their areas.
 - A growing expectation from principal authorities that certain services, activities and assets will be transferred to Community and Town Councils without recognizing that community and town councils do not necessarily have the capacity or capability to take on more activity in the immediate term. Community and town councils will require a period to grow their capacity and capability including establishing an electoral mandate to potentially tax local people more to enable assets or services to be retained.
 - The growing opportunity for Community and Town Councils to expand their roles through positive response to such potential transfers to sustain the level and quality of services at the most local level subject to the points raised above.
 - The apparent mixed picture in terms of situations where services and assets have been transferred to community groups who are not best equipped in terms of resources or expertise to manage them – examples abound where poorly managed transfers have resulted in the recipient organizations unable to apply for grants as lease periods are too short for funding bodies to consider grant provision.
 - A view that the financial constraints and restrictions on growth in levels of precept etc. are not so severe or constrained for the Community and Town Community Councils
- Welsh Government statements and active involvement of the sector suggest a new confidence and belief in the “grass roots” contribution of Community and Town Councils:
 - In terms of the potential role they can play in Alternative Delivery Models of service provision within communities as exemplified in the ‘Is the Feeling Mutual?’ report March 2016 commissioned by a former Local Government Minister where community and town councils were identified as having a significant role to play in sustaining local services in the future with partner organisations such as housing associations and the Third Sector.
 - In terms of their fundamental contribution to democratic processes
 - In terms of their key contribution to and influencing role in relation to a well-informed understanding of service requirements at the most local levels, their specification and the setting of standards for purposes of commissioning / providing / planning those services and facilities
 - Increasing involvement by One Voice Wales in Welsh Government Advisory Boards including National Assets Working Group in particular the work on Community Asset Transfers and the People and Community Working Group on Sustaining Our Communities.

- Local Government re-organisation
 - One Voice Wales member councils believe the current review to be, potentially, a significant contribution towards the inevitable reorganization of local government and related public services within Wales.
 - Any review **must** take into account all three public sector levels as well as other public bodies:
 - o **Welsh Government and its administration.** Consideration is currently being given to increasing the number of A.M's at the Assembly. We believe that in reviewing the number of A.M's, consideration must be given to the changing nature of certain local government services – **for example**, Local Management of Schools, the regionalization of advisory / improvement services and the whole standards issue might suggest that the role of Education services within the Unitary authorities is being diminished and could eventually become little more than a "pay and rations" service. Perhaps it is now time to consider the transfer of Education from local authorities to become the direct responsibility of the Welsh Government. We could offer similar arguments for other services, however our point is simply that any forthcoming review of local government must address the issue of potential transfer, upwards of key services of strategic importance to Wales must form part of that review.
 - o **The Unitary Authorities** – with the recent release of the Green Paper on Local Government re-organisation and the potential for fewer Unitary Authorities within Wales there is potential for decisions taken during this process to reduce or stop services being provided at the second tier of local government to have significant impacts on the future roles of community and town councils...these are unknowns at the present time but given recent financial impacts on non statutory services e.g. recently Gwynedd Council has stated is going to stop funding of 40 youth facilities in their area because of budgetary pressures there is a likelihood that the community and town council sector will have to consider taking on more of this activity in future.
 - o **Community and Town Councils**
 - o **Other public bodies** – Health Services, Community Health Councils and potentially, other agencies
 - We are concerned that any reorganization reviews should not, as in 1974 and 1996 and the more recent Health Service reforms, be seemingly preoccupied with "lines on the map" to the detriment of the fundamental organisation and provision of effective services. We believe strongly that the emphasis must be on "Who does what" in terms of the various tiers and groupings of organisations **prior to any considerations of geographical areas. Importantly, to do this, the current roles and responsibilities of community and town councils must be determined first.**
 - We recognize the inevitability of change and development in the public sector and the need for agility and responsiveness to new circumstances and

opportunities. Notwithstanding there appears on time to have been a “confusion” of initiative based developments – e.g. Spacial Plan areas / city region developments / enterprise zones which are not reflective of the “joined up thinking” approach necessary to achieve effectiveness within and between public services and sectors. Interestingly there has been recent recognition that there needs to be a more defined role for towns within city region areas and that they need a reason to exist and a new purpose as politicians decide how to spend a £1.2bn south Wales economy boost. There has been a recognition that towns need to be ‘vibrant economies’. Current leader of Cardiff City Council Huw Thomas considers that any regional deal needs towns to be a “foundational economy in their own right”.

- Despite the sound principles which underpinned the Making / Delivering the Connections agenda being sound, in practice, from our limited observation, it has not worked successfully once cascaded to the level of practical application i.e. the community and town council level. Indeed this important work carried out in 2006 appears to have largely been forgotten and One Voice Wales considers that re-visiting this work which puts citizens at the centre of public service thinking provides opportunities to re-invigorate the lines of communication and co-operation between community and town councils and their Unitary Authority counterparts. One Voice Wales members consider that community and town councils as empowered bodies of local governance operating alongside unitary authorities would be far better than the status quo of fundamental tensions between two competing visions of what is needed within local communities.
- Our comments on a potential countrywide and cross sector reorganization hopefully convey our view of the necessity for a structured and comprehensive review to underpin such reorganization.

- **Developments in the Community and Town Council Sector**

- In our observation, over time, there has been a development in the level of professionalism within our sector, both in terms of our paid officials, the professionalism of elected members and the standing and influence of the national bodies which represent our sector, both within Wales and UK-wide.
- The requirement for the so-called “larger” first tier councils to be involved with such developments as the “Well Being of Future Generations” legislation could in our view be a requirement for all community and town subject to adequate resources to support the transition from the current position and clear guidelines on joint delivery of activities across community and town council boundaries.
- The confidence and preparedness of town and community councils to take on important activities such as Place Planning
- Austerity and retrenchment is already impacting heavily on those we serve. As other public service access points are closing down or having their services reduced dramatically One Voice Wales members we are experiencing an increase in the extent to which local people turn to the

Community and Town Councils as a more convenient and effective conduit to secure action / responses from other organisations. Naturally this is impacting on the resources of community and town councils as they are having to face up to challenges previously beyond their remit and this is often compounded by the lack of advanced notification of closure or reduction of service by other public bodies. Clearly a **framework for asset and service transition** would benefit those with a vested interest to communicate more effectively and enable change to be managed more effectively between public bodies.

- As a consequence of the above community and town councils are increasingly being asked to provide opportunities / solutions for organizations leaving local communities to undertake outreach surgeries – it is anticipated that this direction of travel will increase should financial austerity continue into the future.
- The current proposals of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) could have a positive impact in terms of attracting a wider range of individuals to the role of local councillor. It is important to note that the Independent Remuneration Panel is of the view that **Community and Town Councillors are not volunteers** because further to the democratic process they have accepted formal responsibilities and they all face some degree of liability, in respect of the Council functions they are running. Over the last three years the IRP have recognized and taken on board the growing role and responsibilities that come with being a community and town councillor and reduced the barriers to entry that may have previously turned away local electors considering local office.

Recent research on the Community and Town Council Sector

In the context of local government reform, a review of the community and town council sector was commissioned in 2017 by Welsh Government to understand the responsibilities and challenges faced by the community and town council sector.

The research sought to understand:

- which services and assets are being managed
- the sources of funding and income councils have to deliver their services and the nature of the current workforce, including the clerk and their role
- the extent and quality of training undertaken related to either delivering services or asset management
- the nature of partnerships councils have with other organisations
- the sources of support they draw upon

Interestingly the key findings from the survey mirror the views of One Voice Wales member council's feedback as part of the consultation undertaken via workshops in November and December and the online survey undertaken in January /February 2018 and outline a recommended way forward for the sector. The Welsh Government research findings are set out below:

Key findings

- Survey results indicate an increase in services delivered and assets managed over time
- Councils report they are increasingly being expected to take on services that require more specialised knowledge.
- Councils desired more two way dialogue with their principal authority with regard to transfers.
- Over half of clerks surveyed work 10 hours a week or less
- There were small increases in clerks undertaking training, but that the quality and value of their training was seen by some to be limited.
- Data show an increase in levels of partnership working.
- There was a need expressed for more guidance on how to take on services and assets
- A slight increase in the number of charters and service level agreements was reported.
- Councils displayed some awareness of their use of statutory powers
- Councillors and clerks expressed a clear desire to be involved in the implementation of the principles of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act in their council.
- Informal networks with other councils were evident and viewed positively
- Councils remained concerned about the low levels of understanding amongst the public about the sector and their role
- Opinion in councils was divided as to the benefits of social media in encouraging greater community engagement. However as Table 1 sets out below there will be a need for community and town councils to embrace social media in the future.

Table 1: Social media and communications

In 2017, 90% of the UK households had internet access, an increase from 89% in 2016 and 57% in 2006. The use of the internet for social networking accounted to 66% of total internet activities in 2017 and above 83% for people aged 16-44 (ONS, 2017). Given their prominence, the internet and social media in particular, are imperative and powerful tools for driving political, economic and social engagement and connecting with citizens at all levels of governance.

According to the latest BDO Social Media in the Local Government Survey in 2015, 100% of the respondent councils had a Twitter account, 90% had a Facebook account, 68% had a YouTube account and 38% an account on Instagram. Social media platforms are now the main channel for many members of the public wishing to communicate with public bodies and hold them to account. However, for local authorities in particular, social media is not only an essential means of strengthening democratic engagement, but of driving efficiency in a climate of significant budgetary reductions. Indeed, 71% of the respondents identified financial benefits from the use of social media. (Source Public Policy Exchange 2018)

The recommendations from Welsh Government Survey of Community and Town Councils are set out below:

- Consideration is given to whether the guidance currently available on the management of services and assets could be improved, better signposted or more tailored to the needs of the sector.
- There would be benefit in reviewing the processes for initiating asset and service transfer from principal councils, to better account for the capacities of community and town councils.
- Further discussion could take place around the types of training that would be most beneficial to councillors and clerks and how that training could be delivered most effectively.
- The sector as a whole should revisit the role of charters as a means of strengthening partnerships with principal authorities.
- Conduct further research with the sector around the degree to which councils understand and use specific powers.
- Facilitate opportunities for councils to properly consider the joint delivery of services or management of assets
- Explore the benefits of centrally co-ordinating tailored communications to the sector

One Voice Wales would support the implementation of the above recommendations in the form of a sector work programme as they address many of the problems identified in previous sections above – this would naturally require appropriate support and resources for implementation and require the collaboration of other public sector partners including Welsh Government and Unitary Authorities.

6. One Voice Wales Response to the Panel's Questions.

The following four sections provide answers to the four questions by the Independent Review Panel. The answers contain feedback obtained via eight consultation events held across Wales including: Caernarfon, Chirk, Howey near Llandrindod, St Clears, Henllys (Cwmbran), Pencoed, Gorseinon as well as with our National Executive Committee/Larger Councils Committees. This was supplemented by an on-line survey in January and February 2018 to enable those who could not attend the above had an opportunity to feed in their views. Additionally we have received individual member council responses for which we are very grateful and their thoughts and comments have been used to inform this consultation response document.

a) WHAT SHOULD COMMUNITY AND TOWN COUNCILS BE RESPONSIBLE FOR?

From the feedback One Voice Wales has received from its member councils it is a given that all the existing powers and duties should be retained – so we do not intend to cover this ground in any great detail but would make the point that we recognise as a sector that use of these powers and duties varies considerably across Wales and there is a need to organise the sector to increase the uniformity and consistency of the sector offering to the local electorates. We have detailed below in Table 2 comments received which show the level of ambition across the sector and identify new areas of responsibility for community and town councils. However there is considerable desire within the sector to do more and sustain locally valued services within communities which may not have been within the remit of community and town councils historically and consequently to enable this to happen there is strong argument for additional powers to be made available to the community and town council sector. Some of these new powers are set out below:

- Through the Local Government Bill introduce measures to reform the laws governing the administration of Community and Town councils, which will include new powers to deliver local services.
- Enable community and town councils to have the power to trade as their Unitary Authority counterparts have to ensure a level playing field and enable to sustaining of valued local services.
- Amend the legislation to enable Community and Town Councils the ability to financially support the repair of church buildings.
- Promote use of the Power of Well Being and remove barriers to the use (e.g. expenditure limit) of this 'right to innovate'.
- Strengthen the role of Community and Town Councils in the planning system by coordinating policy to focus on places and supporting communities to shape the place they live in by putting 'Place Plans' on a statutory footing.

- Introduce a 'right to engage' which will help Community and Town Councils work more equitably and effectively with Unitary Authorities and other public services.

Table 2: Future Area's of Responsibility for Community and Town Councils based on One Voice Wales member councils feedback

- Developing business plans to support community themed projects bespoke to the community/ Place plans/ Community Emergency Planning
- All councils should be aware of potential partnerships e.g. with charities which could draw down funding
- Liaising and communicating with adjoining Community Councils
- All aspects of community development and community support services including community advocacy and the management of community facilities.
- Community renewable energy schemes.
- Waste recycling initiatives including local waste recycling sites.
- Delegation of non-statutory functions and services provided by principal authorities: environmental health matters associated with pest and rodent control; environmental enforcement; local biodiversity programmes; libraries; markets; museums; toilets; community transport schemes; car parks; registration of births, deaths and marriages; town centre cleansing services; day care centres
- Community assets including: Public cemeteries; management of green and other open spaces; parks and play areas; playing fields; footpaths; public lighting; public seating; allotments; war memorials.
- Ancillary support to local health and education initiatives including an element of support to local religious groups.
- Developing supplementary planning guidance to support the local development plan...more Community Council involvement in the LDP and CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) as well as being party to section 106 agreements
- Encouraging Youth Councils, community education including developing classes and support and being more involved with secondary schools/ supporting food banks
- Community grants: providing grants to local organisations including encouraging and developing grass routes sports and recreation
- Social isolation: greater work with Social Care as identified by the work of Solva CC. Identifying members of the community at risk and having clear framework to work with Unitary Authority for resolution.
- Local civic events – Remembrance Sunday parades; Christmas lights.
- Support tourism and local heritage
- One stop shop and sign posting services to principal authority services including cashier facilities for accepting local payments for council tax and other fees.
- Arms length companies to produce income.

our local council sector in Wales is well placed to work up new ways of working and share improvement and developments to ensure sustainable local services for the

future. Councils in Wales are not starting from scratch; they can build on a lot of good work that has been going on over the last five years. But the pressures they face are real and growing. Local community councils could provide the most solid bottom-up framework for community governance because they can be independently grounded through democratic legitimacy and statute.

Community and town councils in Wales have a number of basic responsibilities in making the lives of local communities more comfortable. Essentially these powers fall within three main categories:

- representing the whole electorate within the community or town;
- delivering services to meet local needs;
- and striving to improve quality of life in the community or town

One Voice Wales agrees with the Young Foundation who argue that for the sake of innovation, confidence and clarity, make it clear that community and town councils have a principal purpose, for example, "to improve local liveability" (i.e. community safety, environment, activities and infrastructure et as set out in Table 2 above).

Here's some thought on the potential future roles and responsibilities for community councils which has resonance with the feedback from our member councils to the Review questions and provides a direction of travel for the potential future purpose of the sector:

- **Being asset based leaders** - Identifying, utilising and optimising assets. Local councils can lead the development of asset strategies for their communities to ensure local resources are used to best effect.
- **Achieving fairness for everyone** – addressing the challenges of poverty. With increasing fuel prices local councils could co-ordinate schemes for such as oil purchasing consortiums.
- **Empowering local governance** – development of youth councils. By engaging young people and supporting their involvement in democracy local councils can enable new ideas and initiatives to meet the future needs of their communities.
- **Increasing resources for community benefit** – supporting the development of community renewables. One Voice Wales and Aberystwyth University research on this agenda identifies a 'facilitator' role for local councils in communities taking forward community renewable initiatives. This may include funding feasibility studies on energy options creating new local income streams for re-investment.
- **Enjoying locally relevant services** – services designed based on local needs using robust community engagement methods. Increasingly local councils are going to need to demonstrate effective use of precept to their communities – community plans or 'place plans' such as those developed by Borth Community Council will enhance local accountability and engagement.
- **Enriching social capital and well-being** – working with social entrepreneurs and social enterprises to jointly deliver services for communities, for example, youth drop-in centres.

- **Valuing local distinctiveness** – initiatives supporting local heritage and tourism. Kidwelly Town Council has designed a range of leaflets attracting visitors to local historic monuments.
- **Developing reliable Infrastructure** – creating ‘One Stop Shop’ hubs such as the one being developed by the Penllyn Partnership by Bala Town Council and neighbouring community councils.
- **Enhancing environmental capacity** – embracing bio-diversity initiatives – Llandough Community Council has its own strategy - such as creating new allotments for community growing or community orchards that act not only as a food source but educational resource to local primary schools.
- **Supporting a dynamic local economy** – working with local businesses to support employment initiatives’ including apprenticeships and mentoring schemes

These thematic areas align with the work of the Carnegie Trust, who, over the last six years who have identified key areas of activity to improve local resilience within communities and details of which are set out in their recent publication ‘Supporting Local Places and Local People: Opportunities and Challenges for Welsh Towns’ (Rebekah Menzies 2017). Given Welsh Governments recent support for the Understanding Welsh Places programme we have made the assumption that the above document will have been presented as evidence to the Review Panel members however if not would direct them to this publication.

The drivers, synergies and justification for these thematic roles are set out below:

- The Welsh Government’s Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act – will force a re-think in public service delivery. In future, more collaboration and more innovation in the way services are delivered (as above for example)
- Financial Pressure – cuts force innovation. The Wales Wellbeing Bond and the Community Interest Fund in general provide an opportunity for co-production in designing and delivering services. New partnerships could emerge between Community and Town Councils, voluntary sector and unitary authorities
- Charters with unitary authorities (including a Local Councils/ County Councillor Member’s “Protocol” in Carmarthenshire). In best cases, these have resulted in a much healthier relationship between the two tiers – more respect and coherent partnership.
- A proportion of Community Infrastructure Levies (CIL) collected by principal authorities in Wales with up to 15% being devolved to local Councils. (One Voice Wales has published a guide for Councils in relation to the levy)

Although ‘Place Plans’ were not included in the Planning (Wales) Act there is still much interest in their development within the local council sector. Currently Planning Aid Wales are developing a toolkit on the delivery of Place Plans and One Voice Wales considers it critical that community and town councils are given a central role in their delivery so as to enable the joining up of democratic accountability with local service

planning and delivery. Additionally, in considering responsibilities going forward, we would express our concern about the introduction, through the Wellbeing of Future Generations legislation, that the identification and prioritization of service needs and standards will move further away from the level of communities as identified in current and future structural groupings. The current information on Public Service Boards appears to reflect an expectation of a "macro" overview of requirements and priorities as the basis for service planning. This clearly needs addressing especially if there are fewer Unitary Authorities in the future.

However, any consideration of future responsibilities must be reflective of assurances as to financial and budgetary viability and to the availability of sufficient resources, including staff, to discharge services and activities effectively. There are opportunities to develop new forms of community and town council organization, for example, joint delivery partnerships that could enable resources to be better utilized going forward. One Voice Wales members consider the rationalization of councils via mergers would not be a step in the right direction rather that the sovereignty of existing councils be maintained. The unintended consequences of such a move towards mergers would be the reduction in the numbers of community and town councillor's and thereby creating a net reduction in numbers of those providing resource to civic society in Wales...not to mention the increased democratic deficit of community and town councilors taking responsibility for ever larger electorates quite possibly beyond existing community boundaries.

The feedback received from member councils is that roles and responsibilities will vary from council area to area however this will be as a consequence of locally derived needs. Whilst the range of services may vary what is clear is that the process of determination, that is, the engagement with the community should be consistent and transparent across all community and town council areas. In reality the range of activities currently will be driven by the drive, motivations and priorities of individual councils – further work will be required to determine what local residents can expect as a minimum from their local community or town council.

The current reality is that many community based services will only be able to continue if Community and Town Councils are supported and encouraged to play a more active role in their local design and delivery. As a consequence one area that will need further consideration is that of concurrent functions between Unitary Authorities and community and town councils. One Voice Wales considers that much could be learnt from Cornwall County Council's 'A Framework for Town and Parish Councils and Community Groups to have an Increased Role in Service Delivery' model document.

This framework takes into account, "concurrent functions" which are functions that both Cornwall Council and Town and Parish Councils have the legal power to deliver. In implementing this framework the shared aims are to:

- Continue to develop a 'holistic' long-term place based approach (as opposed to a short-term single service based approach) to local service delivery;

- maintain community access to services that might otherwise be at risk, particularly “concurrent functions”;
- increase satisfaction with services;
- provide greater local influence over services;
- where possible, maintain and enhance standards;
- enhance the role of local councils in their communities;
- generate greater community pride in local areas;
- promote engagement of local communities in local government; and
- achieve ‘value for money’.

There are a number of options as to how Town and Parish Councils and local Community Groups can be more involved which could be replicated within Wales as set out below:

Option 1: Influencing and monitoring local service delivery:

Towns and Parish Councils and local Community Groups may wish to influence, request changes to existing contracts held by Cornwall Council or input into requirements when new contracts are retendered. They can play a role in monitoring existing service delivery in their area.

Option 2: Joint delivery / service enhancement:

Town and Parish Councils and Community Groups may choose to enhance an existing service provided by Cornwall Council by funding work that exceeds the base level provided. They may also deliver additional services not provided by Cornwall Council. This could be through a separate contract or by extending an existing one.

Option 3: Agency Agreements, Management Agreements, Licenses and Sponsorship

Cornwall Council currently offers agency Agreements to Town and Parish Councils for 3 services. The agreement sets out basic standards and conditions (e.g. Health and Safety) and includes a lump sum based on the minimum level of service Cornwall Council would undertake. The Town and Parish Council may then choose to enhance this service locally.

Option 4: Delegation of service delivery

A Town and Parish council or local Community Group may wish to take on full responsibility for the delivery of a local service on behalf of Cornwall Council. Many of these services are non-statutory services. However some of the services are statutory duties of Cornwall Council.

Option 5: Transfer of a service

If Cornwall Council proposes to reduce or no longer provide a service, Town and Parish councils and local Community Groups will be consulted and offered the opportunity to take on delivery themselves. In exploring the available options the transfer of any related assets may be part of the discussions.

Option 6: Exclusions

Some services are not currently being considered for transfer. These are listed below and the reasons for each are briefly detailed however, in many of the examples used statute will prevent the transfer of the service. Despite this Town and Parish Councils may be able to influence and monitor the delivery of these services as outlined previously.

With regard to the above One Voice Wales members consider the concept of "competent authorities" to be relevant as regards any formal devolution of functions as set out above. There could be grounds for a straightforward assessment process in relation to any proposed devolved function to provide assurance that individual community and town councils have the necessary capability and capacity to discharge such matters effectively.

We have also seen greater interest in the community and town council sector from other national organizations, in particular Age Concern, who following a RoundTable event on Loneliness, thinks our sector could:

- Support older people and community groups to develop and deliver local solutions that counteract loneliness.
- Consider innovative ways to support community groups by encouraging the use of council facilities
- Work with communities across generations to foster informal structures that enable people to participate in society on their own terms.

Feedback from member councils resonate with the above as exemplified by the work of Solva Community Council on domiciliary care ~ again a role and responsibility that could be replicated by other community and town councils across Wales.

As a consequence of the introduction of a National Awards scheme by One Voice Wales the sector is better able to learn from itself and raise the improvement bar based on the examples set by other councils and implement new services. For example in 2017 the following councils were winners and provided case studies on the following:

Best Annual Report – Cwmbran Community Council
Best Environmental Project – Three Crosses Community Council
Best website – Higher Kinnerton

- Best Community Engagement – Borth Community Council (Community Emergency Planning)
- Best Tourism Initiative – Pembrey and Burry Port Town Council (Town in Bloom winners)
- Best Sustainability Initiative – Chepstow Town Council (Fairtrade)
- Best Youth Initiative – Pontardawe Town Council (Youth Councillors/Go Valley website)
- Best Local Service – Solva Community Council (domiciliary care services)
- Heritage project – Llangollen Town Council (Iron Bridge regeneration)

To re-iterate - having clarity of purpose will enable local people to engage more effectively and contribute to the functions of community and town councils in Wales...and having a flexible approach is largely right as the offering will vary from place to place. But for it to succeed as a strategy for collective empowerment for community and town councils and an offer to citizens, we need to clarify the nature of the opportunities being opened up locally - which ultimately community and town councils may not find out about until Unitary Authorities are reformed and their roles and responsibilities identified and resolved.

b) HOW SHOULD THEY OPERATE?

Table 3 below sets out some of the thinking currently within the community and town council sector. However, what was clear from both the consultation events and the on-line survey feedback was that this was not an easy question to answer and had member councils frequently stating this will depend on x or y. With the unknown of Unitary Authority reform community and town councils responses were based on the here and now – consequently this question will need to be revisited should there be any Unitary Authority developments in the near future.

Furthermore without a defined purpose or roles currently there appears to have been a tendency to revert to the status quo when responding to the questions posed.

Table 3: One Voice Wales member views on ‘How Community and Town Councils should operate’

- They should exist and operate right across all the communities of Wales/ To be universal to serve all communities in Wales
- Clear template on services that are provided by Community Councils – a clearly defined role.
- Be able to apply for grant funding from Welsh Government/ With some form of direct funding such as business rate
- Professional bodies with a clear statement of purpose led by remunerated members and advised by professionally qualified Clerks possessing sector relevant qualifications.
- Accountable / Publish Annual Report / Publish Plan Medium Term governance accountability

- Shared resources and workforce across Community and Town Councils and between layers of local government/ Possessing the necessary powers to work across boundaries to support other community and town councils either in partnership or in a client and contractor role/ Joint delivery of services by Community and Town Councils where this could prove of benefit/ Closer co-operation with other Town and Community Councils
- Power to trade and carry out commercial activities across community areas.
- Widen the extent of powers to permit collaboration with other public sector bodies as well as the third sector including the power to set up arms-length bodies including companies and trusts/ Interact with voluntary bodies/organisations
- Promote economies of scale by local councils sharing key posts with other community areas e.g. Clerks, RFOs, Community Development Officers and Cemetery Managers being shared amongst grouped councils/ Groups of councils co-operating in identified areas e.g. old rural district
- Community Councils to network to share services and expertise/ Councils work together but stay independent
- A planning council not a responding council
- Regularisation and standardisation of community and town council procedures, Standing Orders and Constitutions
- More dialogue and working together with County Councils – targeting workable goals for the community / The ability to second key personnel from the principal authorities to promote capacity and capability and to expand local government knowledge, expertise and specialist skills.
- One Voice Wales should be properly funded by the Welsh Government.
- Training should be mandatory and easily accessible so councillors/Clerks know what they're doing
- Formally trained staff and councillors with good working relationships between councillors and staff – respect both ways. Strategic staff structure with appropriate skill set to deliver.
- Greater participation in a council by community groups and members of the public
- Embrace technology in order to engage the local population, which should lead to the public taking a greater interest in local politics
- Option for a local council to determine its own pathway. The pathway will determine the suite of powers available with wider powers for ambitious councils and a reduction in powers for councils merely wanting to act as a local voice. The pathway could also determine the level of audit, inspection and regulation requirements. For example, councils with very low ambition could revert to a limited and lighter touch audit regime.
- Councils need the freedom to adopt systems that work best for them e.g. contracting out/employing own staff and should be encouraged to seek maximum engagement with their communities in order to achieve a mandate for additional services and responsibilities that they take on
- Accountable and transparent formal decision making arrangements with a regular cycle of council and committee meetings for ambitious councils including clear lines of reporting, sound and sustainable financial arrangements and a scheme of delegation to officers.

We need to be clear about the recommendations we put forward as a sector about how to strengthen community and town councils to make them more flexible and appropriate for the current challenges of community governance.

A number of developments would assist community and town councils to operate more effectively and efficiently and consistently for their communities as set out below:

- Development of Framework for Asset and Service Devolution between Unitary Authorities (or public services) and Community and Town Councils as has already been done in Cornwall CC
- Development of a Community Planning Model for Wales with a supporting toolkit – many examples of how to do community planning but not a consistent approach and one that everyone can get behind
- Introduction of an Innovation Grant for Local Councils –Establish a framework of support and incentives for encouraging further cooperation around community governance, supporting the management of change and developing capabilities and legitimacy at the very local level.
- New Council Start – Up Grant – OVW getting several expressions of interest but currently no funding to support this.
- Time for Towns – use the work of the Carnegie Trust on Turnaround Towns to implement a programme of improvement as well as deploying the Understanding Welsh Places initiative which will enable community and town councils as well as partner agencies to access data relevant to sub Unitary Authority areas/ local geographies. Based on the Understanding Scottish Places programme initiated in 2010 this has had a profound effect on policy at the town and community level and realised multiple benefits for communities and the organisations supporting them.
- Development of a Local Democracy marketing programme specifically targeting future potential community and town councillors
- Framework for Activist Councils – although we are working towards General Power of Competence in Wales there is no reason why we could not have a self evaluation scheme for councils that informs residents of the level of governance in their area...e.g. if you badge yourself as a bronze council you'll have certain governance in place, silver additional and so forth.
- Reconsideration of the Electoral Commission's 2004 proposals for the core funding of electoral services nationally in light of the new local democracy agenda
- Central government could commit to match member subscriptions of One Voice Wales to enable greater support and advice provision to be available to the sector

In terms of stronger local democracy the following developments are suggested to the Panel:

- Strengthen the standards regime governing councillor behaviour by allowing Community and Town Councils to refer alleged breaches to the 'county-wide' Standards Committee for breaches of the code of conduct.
- Support the sector to create an improvement and development strategy, providing a framework for good governance, community engagement and council improvement.
- Work with the sector to encourage more people to become councillors, making it easier for people to stand and serve, promoting contested elections and establishing a national democracy fund.
- Introduce a duty to ensure community and town involvement in public service board scrutiny processes.
- Support the development of models of scrutiny where Community and Town Councils play a part in monitoring other public bodies and their commissioned services.
- Structured communication between localities and County to highlight what is working well to avoid duplication of effort. There should be an avoidance of duplication of resources at Community/Town and County level.
- Formal Clerk networks that share best practice and good governance.
- Structured training and induction for new Councillors that sets the standards and means of communication
- There could be advantages of economies of scale for purchasing purposes, for example, where there is more than one community council within a locality. This might specifically be helpful for play area equipment for example.
- Pooling resources for legal and insurance service provision might also realise savings.
- For some smaller Council's the clerk may be the primary annual expenditure. Perhaps consideration could be given to the clerk role and whether it should cover more than one Council. Or have a hub and spoke approach pooling expertise e.g. for grant applications and sharing best practice.
- Greater recognition should be given to the role of community and town councils with regard to town centre regeneration programmes – there was a noticeable absence of reference to the sector in the Vibrant Places Strategy and feedback from One Voice Wales member councils suggest they have largely been ignored around this agenda. With financial austerity this surely cannot continue.
- With the ending of the Communities First programme by Welsh Government there are opportunities for Community and Town Councils to play a more engaged role and support the anti-poverty agenda being the public service closest to those affected. New powers to address this

agenda may help community and town councils to deliver meaningful anti-poverty measures.

- As highlighted recently by Pembrokeshire County Council, Community and Town Councils could be recipients of second home tax to assist community developments – they could receive upto 75% of this revenue to put towards local causes.
- Finally there could be an operational role for community and town councils in terms of leading local economic development forums as exemplified by recent developments in Cornwall where councils (town councils to date) form part of a local Place Shaping Forum – Appendix 3 sets out the Terms of Reference. This provides an opportunity for the local public body to link democratic accountability to local delivery in a space that enables partner organisations to contribute to local sustainable services.

c) WHAT'S STANDING IN THEIR WAY TO DELIVER FOR THE LOCAL COMMUNITY?

Feedback from member councils suggests there are many challenges standing in their way to deliver for local communities. In particular a need to focus on:

- Working together more effectively and across boundaries
- Developing local councils with the flexibility to meet local needs and requirements
- Developing local councils that ensure citizens are an equal partner in determining the services and support they need and receive
- Developing clerks and councillors to ensure they have the right skills to meet the above challenges.
- Better understanding of priorities for their local area / underlying issues not truly understood
- Local councils recognising the need to up precepts to take on additional services from other parts of the public service family or even private sector locally and appoint new staff and allocate appropriate resources

Town Councils are not even part of the statutory consultees to this agenda. And the Local Resilience Forums have no representation by Community and Town Council's so foundation work required in advance of our sector playing an active part.

- Bottom-up fixing needed – it's a problem currently for Community and Town Councils to get their issues on Unitary Authority agendas or Public Service Board agendas
- Connectivity between Public Service Boards and Community and Town Councils inconsistent – Charters could be a potential solution but will require renewed support from Unitary Authorities.
- Fears of hollowing out a real concern for Unitary Authorities as reported in a recent Institute of Fiscal Studies report in September 2017 – this could hinder discussions on managed transitions of services across Wales
- And on a similar theme a lack of preparedness by community and town councils for asset and service devolution though it is acknowledged that Welsh Government has put in motion actions to address this situation.
- Currently the sector has no representation on the Workforce Partnership Council and we will be working with Welsh Government colleagues in addressing this situation to ensure that in these significant times of change the local councils sector voice is heard when shaping our communities future services.

Table 4: Overview of issues raised by One Voice Wales member councils as to factors standing in their way to deliver

- The key restriction is the concern that electors will complain about double taxation if services and assets are transferred from unitary authorities.
- Councillors who see themselves as 'unpaid volunteers' and not elected representatives
- There is a need for statutory clarification about what the sector is expected to deliver and what powers it can exercise. At present most of these authorities' responsibilities are in essence voluntary and this is not a sustainable and modern

- Current financial framework – in general there is limited financial capacity; no access to government grants; double taxation issues associated with the devolution of services from principal authorities (including asset transfers); no access to local business rates with all expenditure met via local council tax. Members have a tendency to act in a frugal manner because of these constraints.
- Not all communities in Wales have a local council acting as a local voice.
- Lack of diversity in council membership: this also ties into the inability to attract new members. The time and cost to the individual to get involved in council activities can be a deterrent to full time workers or those with family commitments.
- The drive and determination by some town and community Councillors, and Councils being large enough to operate efficiently
- Lack of purpose, strategic planning and ambition.
- Often Community Councils are deemed irrelevant in the democratic process. Councils should be encouraged to be the representation of their Community and used as such by County Councils and Welsh Government. There seems to be an obstacle between sectors due to the lack of insight into what Community Councils/ Lack of trust from government to allow councils to grow and evolve.
- Restrictions and controls which are imposed by County Council and Government. It is assumed that County Councillors are protective of their responsibilities and reluctant to relinquish them. Poor and ineffective decision making on the part of the Council possibly due to bureaucracy and lack of determination. Funding either partial or fully for new areas of responsibility off loaded by County to Community Councils. Reduced emphasis on minority groups. It is clear from a planning perspective Powys CC take little regard to recommendations from community councils – we are the local voice but it is so often ignored. I am sure community and town councils would put more in if their views were taken more seriously. Most people see us as a talking shop with no real authority Do we need to be bigger with more budget or does this take away the local element – this needs discussion There is often a lack of professionalism at community councils – well intentioned people but not with the skills or training required
- Often Community Councils are ignored as being un-important. Councils should be empowered and seen by County Councils and Welsh Government to be representative of their Community. Lack of understanding of the sector is also a barrier, young people should be taught in schools about how their local Councils

- At present, T&CCs are often too small to effect significant change for the better on any meaningful scale. T&CCs are often seen as doing only small-scale things for their communities, or by many people, T&CCs are not seen at all. Public apathy (or lack of knowledge) leads to fewer and fewer people being interested in voting and fewer and fewer people being interested in standing for election to do what is best for their communities. Having to stand for election in itself is also a major barrier to many people, who are passionate about improving their local communities and would be (and are already in many cases) excellent drivers of change and deliverers on the ground, but are put off by the election process, the politicisation and the criticism involved. Our T&CC has only two staff, both part-time. The time available to them, to do anything above the basics of running an organisation effectively, implementing council decisions, advising the council, dealing with meetings and complying with the council's audit requirements is minimal. This lack of resources, the lack of general power to improve local quality of life, the lack of public interest and the election process are possibly the biggest inhibitors standing in the way of T&CCs delivering more for their communities.

- Threat of dissolution.

- Potential undermining of existing democratic structures at the local council level – Education Reform consultation last year recommending ending the right for community councils to have a community governor on primary schools. One Voice Wales members would argue this need to be strengthened rather than ties cut.
- There is a lack of capacity in patches across Wales: some councillors lack clarity on their role and the confidence to do anything practical.
- Action cannot be local in isolation – it has to integrate into the work underway to co-ordinate sustainability and sustainable economic development at a regional scale. The challenge remains the same - to integrate the local with the regional and national. Aligning the work of local councils with the Local Well being Plans and Local Development Plans has been challenging to date though not insurmountable in future with better lines of communication between the sector and other public bodies.
- Community and Town Councils are not fully represented across Wales on the

Additionally the Review of Community and Town Council Funding in the autumn of 2015 identified there was a consensus that the nature of the sector – a high number of very small councils – means that communicating with the sector and effecting change in it is not a straightforward matter. Features of the sector which were highlighted in discussions included:

- Councils do not cover the whole of Wales
- A high number of small councils;
- Councillors see themselves as volunteers, and the fact that they are unpaid means their goodwill needs to be maintained;
- In many places there can be difficulties in recruiting councillors and many are co-opted after the elections have been held.
- Many councils rely on a part-time Clerk, and have limited ICT and other facilities;
- Significant changes in the role of councils, and the demands placed on them, could see a high turnover of clerks and councillors. One Voice Wales has been giving increasing support to community and town councils on employment matters and the recruitment of clerks.
- Councillors regard the link to their local community as absolutely vital and believe that the creation of larger councils covering a wider geographical area will break that link and lead to greater difficulties in recruiting councillors. The potential for 'clustering' of councils or development of potential joint delivery bodies will need to be dealt with sensitively.
- Councils were highly concerned about increases to their precept, and a careful approach to use of their budgets was a factor in their attitude to OVW membership fees.
- Cuts to services and the delegation of local authority services was the most pressing issue facing councils at the present time and generated heated discussion, particularly on the role of local authorities in enabling councils to take sound decisions on the viability of transferring services.
- For larger councils, the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act presents new challenges in terms of how they engage with their electorates and collaborate with Public Service Board plans.

Community and town councils wish to play an active role in supporting the 'reform of local government' agenda and One Voice Wales member councils have recognised a number of significant gaps in capacity and knowledge within the sector. The key gaps that have been identified are as follows:

Sustainability – in the light of the Well-Being of Future Generations Act there is a need to encourage all councils to contribute to the wider strategic agenda of sustainability irrespective of whether they fall under the requirements of the Act.

Financial Governance and Accountability –The Auditor General for Wales has again in 2017 published concerns about failings in the systems of governance and accountability in a large number of councils throughout Wales. The audit regime for

councils has been strengthened since April 2015 and revised guidance on budgeting and internal audit has been circulated to all councils. It is important that councils become fully aware of their responsibilities and obligations. It is clear however that One Voice Wales needs an additional training module that goes into more depth about what is required of Councils. One Voice Wales will be actively encouraging councils to take up further training on financial governance which is covered in the Advanced Finance training module.

Working with the Third Sector – Many Council's have a long history of working in partnership with the third sector but this is not widespread throughout Wales. The growing incidence of devolution of services and community asset transfers will require the local council and third sector to join forces and create effective partnerships to ensure that use of social capital is maximised for the benefit of the people of Wales. Training is much needed in this area and it may well be desirable to open up such a training module for both Councillors and third sector representatives. We will aim to build on this following the recent Partnership Council for Wales (February 2018) where an action point was for One Voice Wales and the WCVA to consider how they may collaborate more effectively in future.

Managing and Supporting Local Events – A major element of the work of the majority of councils in Wales is the organisation of local events such as fetes, summer festivals, carnivals and a wide range of Christmas events. It is vitally important that such events are well managed and comply with statutory requirements such as health and safety etc. Ensuring local council compliance is becoming more of an issue as more work is undertaken by councils – especially when the service hasn't been undertaken by the sector previously.

Appointing Youth Representatives and forming Youth Councils – The importance of creating a greater diversity in Council composition is paramount if the needs of all sectors of the community are to be taken into account. There is, to date, only limited evidence of developments in appointing youth representatives and forming youth councils and this may well be due to the previous lack of guidance and information available to Councillors. During 2016 One Voice Wales through the support of Welsh Government funding drafted a new guidance document on Youth Councils for the local council sector – One Voice Wales will continue to market and encourage councils to develop Youth Council arrangements in their areas however there are at the present time no specialist resources available within the sector to support councils on this endeavour.

Community Renewables – This is an area of significant importance as Wales strives to conserve its resources, manage climate change and maximise the use of its natural resources. Councils need more knowledge and active encouragement to take on board

the critical challenges that need to be addressed. Whilst there are organisations that can provide support to individual councils there is no central resource available within the sector to enable councils to engage with this agenda fully.

Working with Public Service Boards - A major step in support of full partnership working would be to ensure that the community and town council sector gets a seat on every Public Services Board (PSB's) in Wales. With the implications of the Future Generations Act on larger community councils (income over £200k) there will be a need for closer working relations between the community and town council sector and current Public Service Board member organisations - this would mean having a place on the Public Service Board within each Local Authority geography and able to play a full role in the decision making that impacts on the communities that locally elected councillors are accountable too.

Funding for Community and Town Council Sector - One Voice Wales recognises that this will require new skills and capacity within the local councils sector. Preparation work needed to deliver a major change in the community and town council sector would be substantial and Welsh Government funding would be essential to deal with the costs involved. One Voice Wales' members consider it necessary for the Welsh Government to allocate a block grant to increase the number of councils in Wales to ensure 100% coverage. A block grant is also needed to fund those services that are devolved as well as the transfer of community assets processes across Wales. Specifically in terms of fairer funding for community and town councils One Voice Wales would bring to the Panel's attention for the need to:

- Ensure the Revenue Support Grant and the range of specific grant funding from the Government is passed on to Community and Town councils by Unitary Authorities where appropriate.
- Reform the business rate system to provide a share for Community and Town Councils to help them support local economic development, regeneration and growth.
- Serious consideration should now be given for Community and Town Councils to receive funding directly from the Welsh Government. For example, the introduction of a Community and Town Council Improvement Grant programme would encourage innovation and may provide the necessary resource to pump prime the transition of assets or services between the two tiers, something which is absent at the present time.
- Ensure communities benefit from development through stronger measures to provide community and town councils with a greater share of Community Infrastructure Levy than the current 15% 'meaningful amount'.
- Enable Work with One Voice Wales to support the organisation playing a greater role in accessing European funding for the benefit of Community and Town Councils and the communities they serve.

- Whilst perhaps a minor matter in the overall considerations of the Panel, we have considered the existing arrangements whereby monies arising from local planning gain, such as Section 106 monies or Community Infrastructure Levies (we understand) go directly to the principal authority. We take the view that if a development arises within an area which provides some form of development premium, that such funding should go straight to the town or community council for investment directly within the community where the development is based. This should not - as is currently suggested to us – be reliant on the Community or Town Council having a Place Plan as justification for passing the monies for direct use in the community.

One Voice Wales believes that the level of engagement with the public and the degree of quality services delivered have both improved significantly over the past decade or so. Whilst there is a long way yet to go, the sector is well poised to take on the mantle of responsibility envisaged in relation to what the Welsh Government seeks to deliver and what the public deserves. The wide variation across the sector exists largely due to historical reasons, but the foundations are already in place for rapid and meaningful improvement, where relevant. Like all other public sector bodies, there are some severe challenges ahead, but the dedication of local representatives will sustain the necessary efforts required at this time.

Awareness of the work of Community and Town Councils - In 2014, the Welsh Government commissioned a survey of the public's perceptions of Community Councils. The report highlights that there is generally a high level of awareness of Community Councils, they are valued by communities and effective engagement increases satisfaction. However, there is a lack of awareness of what they do and some confusion with Local Authorities' functions. There is considerable confusion over the amount of precept raised by Community Councils.

The lack of awareness on the part of the public in Wales as to what is done by the various sectors, for example, the split in functionality between unitary and community/town councils. Many people fail to distinguish, for example, between the roles of local government and those of health boards, whilst many more do not understand the distinction between local and central government responsibilities over highway construction and maintenance. The answer, therefore, is for more education and engagement with the local public, something that community and town councils are well placed to help with.

To overcome the barriers and challenges a number of issues need to be addressed. Again these issues were re-affirmed as still existing in the eight Independent Panel Review consultation events held by One Voice Wales mentioned above:

- A clear demarcation and public statement on what the precept pays for: what does the unitary authority do and what does the community/town council do. Precept linked to specific services and outcomes – it becomes obvious what the local electors money is spent on and whether it has been spent well.
- Some Charters with unitary authorities are a bit light touch. The charters need to be given more weight and linked to a clear annual action plan. The Cabinet Secretary has been made aware of the concerns of the Community and Town Council sector during 2017-18.
- Councillors need better instruction on their roles and some kind of intervention to give them more confidence in carrying out these roles – One Voice Wales has worked with Welsh Government in 2017 to develop a positive narrative for the local councils sector in advance of the 2017 elections in the form of a Local Elections Guidance document for prospective candidates. One Voice Wales supported the marketing of the 2017 elections encouraging local people to stand for election as a community or town councillor. Further work in advance of the next elections will be required to encourage new councillor entrants.
- Clerks need to be better equipped. Increasing the professional capacity and status of the clerk role would have enormous benefits. Clerks are the corner stone of an effective council. This inevitably means greater financial support from the Welsh Government. Councils often perform best when they have access to easy to understand guidance about practical action that supports strategic agendas – for example the development guidance in 2016-17 on Youth Councils. In 2018-19 One Voice Wales will endeavour to provide additional guidance and support documents to the community and town council sector in Wales albeit external financial support may be required to enable this to happen.
- Local scale plans have to be based on wide, democratic engagement. They have to address immediate and locally relevant issues if they are to generate commitment and support. Whilst in principle they support wider and larger strategic aims such as resilience and sustainability, they have to be presented in an accessible and locally relevant context. With the requirement to produce Annual Reports for those councils who fall under the statutory requirements of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act One Voice Wales will be actively engaged in providing support for the Councils concerned.
- One Voice Wales needs more resource either in staff or the financial capacity to procure expertise that can be directed to increasing the capacity and confidence of councils to fulfil the roles described above. The review of Community and Town Councils Funding Arrangements in 2015 recognised that the organisation had a low resource base and was struggling to cope with the increasing demands being placed on it. It has become apparent in 2017-18 that the demands upon One Voice Wales are increasing especially as membership has increased to over 80% of all local councils in Wales.

There are however several impending opportunities for overcoming the barriers and meeting the needs:-

- The implementation of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act by community and town councils will need to be carefully monitored to determine its impact - it presents significant challenges to the sector in terms of developing the capacity and skills needed to comply with the SD Duty requirements.
- Together with the local councils Manifesto launched in October 2015, the current Community and Town Council Review 2017-8 by Welsh Government represents an opportunity for the Community and Town Council sector to present a vision for the future role of local councils in Wales.
- The Local Wellbeing Plans should in theory provide a structure into which Community and Town Council planning and strategy can integrate and thus complement and be supported by county and emerging regional approaches. To date there has been a very mixed level of engagement by Public Service Boards and further work will be needed to ensure greater consistency of engagement with the sector across Wales.
- The potential development of community hubs and third sector-Community and Town Council partnerships would ensure that responsibility and resources are shared. Consortia of councils, voluntary groups and social businesses present a stronger more representative structure for raising funds and taking action. In this model, Community and Town Councils can provide seed funding from reserves or precept and form the basis of applications for charitable, lottery or loan funding.
- Organisations with a specific remit such as The Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens (FCFCG), Community Energy Wales and Planning Aid Wales are able to provide practical guidance and financial support to councils and their local partners.

The work begun in 2015-16 by Welsh Government with partners including One Voice Wales, WLGA, TUC Wales, Wales Co-operative Centre and WCVA on **Alternative Delivery Models** (albeit this has been delayed during 2017-18) provides an opportunity to consider new working relationships and organisational partnerships across Wales between local councils and stakeholder organisations. For example, Community Hubs would give councillors more confidence – in this model the council works in partnership with voluntary groups and residents and gets clarity on what the people want for their community and what they expect from their council. The forum can act as a means for clarifying misunderstandings and establishing what the precept can/should be spent on and whether it should be raised to meet certain objectives.

One Voice Wales very much welcomed the Cabinet Secretary's announcements at the National Conference in October 2016 to take forward an agenda of action to help build resilience and renewal in community and town councils:

1. Produce a toolkit to support community councils in working through what is required in taking on new services and assets, building on experiences of the key ingredients. Work has begun on this in 2017-18 and it is anticipated this work will be completed in 2018-19.

2. Press ahead with legislating for the **General Power of Competence**, shaped by the suggestions made in response to the previous Government's consultation, for innovative ambitious councils looking for more freedom to serve their communities.
3. Re-energise ties between community councils and local authorities and provide a platform to share the good examples across Wales, bringing the new cadre of county and community councillors
4. Facilitate the creation of **clusters** of smaller community councils, making some modest funding available to support the initial setting up of joint arrangements. The findings of the 2017-18 pilot program will assist in the future direction of such arrangements.
5. Legislate to make it an obligation on councils to **consider and plan for their training needs** and review it regularly.
6. Ensure citizens are kept informed and have the right to **make representations** on any business conducted at a council meeting. Learn from where this is done well and look for a legislative opportunity to strengthen current provisions.
7. Support community councils to **raise awareness and encourage participation** in community council elections and to increase diversity

However, in order to realise the opportunities the current environment offers One Voice Wales member councils consider that there are several further activities that need to be progressed as set out below:

- Additional financial support for One Voice Wales and /or for groups to enable the creation of new Councils in those communities currently without a local council
- Introduction of guidance on grouped councils, partnerships and federation arrangements isn't currently in place however it is anticipated that useful learning will be derived from the Cluster Pilots programme in 2017-18 which can be shared with local councils upon completion of the programme.
- Guidance developed for TUPE and delegated functions for community and town councils
- Introduction of an accreditation scheme – One Voice Wales will be presenting papers to the National Training and Advisory group in 2018-19 to look at how this may be taken forward within the community and town council sector.
- One Voice Wales has begun work on the Alternative Models of Delivery with Welsh Government and this provides the vehicle to explore the development of guidance on these topics.
- The creation of a range of specialist posts in One Voice Wales to support local councils eg with the current 'devolution of services' agenda and transfer of assets and implementing the Welsh Language Champions initiative across all community and town councils

- The development of clear guidance on the funding arrangements for delegated or devolved services/assets
- Commissioning the regular surveys of Community and Town Councils to better understand their needs and activities and the outcomes achieved for communities. Working with Welsh Government a comprehensive survey was undertaken on the asset and devolution of services in 2017-18 which will help to inform future support and developments on this topic.
- Commission research to examine possible mechanisms for directly funding Community and Town Councils to include:
 - Reviewing current practices in the funding of delegated functions
 - Procedures for the avoidance of double taxation
 - Implementation of directly funded grant schemes
 - Address the issue of concurrent functions and improve local accountability and transparency
- Development of a programme for improvement based on the availability of community based grant scheme for community and town councils to encourage innovation and efficiencies in service provision at the very local level

d) HOW DO COUNCILS ENSURE THEY BEST REPRESENT THEIR LOCAL COMMUNITY?

Community and Town Councils can and do play a vital role in creating and sustaining a strong sense of community. One Voice Wales believes that community and town councils, as the first tier of government in Wales, are well-placed to ensure the sustainability of community development actions supported by other sectors. One Voice Wales is also mindful of the importance of the Welsh Government's vision for community involvement in developing public services in Wales. Through promoting local developments, working alongside partners based in or supporting the community, the increased interaction between individuals in the community can engender a positive outlook and feeling of well-being. As the individual communities of Wales develop in this way they will make a significant contribution to the social and economic development of Wales.

Table 5 below and overleaf provides much detail on the views expressed by One Voice Wales member councils on how they can ensure they best represent their local community.

Table 5: One Voice Wales member council views on how councils ensure they best represent their local community

- Having clear plans of action based on engagement of community needs that are communicated effectively to the electorate and report on progress undertaken at least annually to local residents to enable full accountability and transparency of elected

members

- Good liaison between Community and Town Councillor's and County Councillors, Assembly TC's and local Member of Parliament / European Parliament
- Keep the public informed of how the precept is spent and making optimum use of the precept – partnership working with local authority and outside bodies
- Identify specific very local issues which County Council may have overlooked
- By positioning themselves at the heart of the community and being able to hold other public bodies to account through effective scrutiny/ Minor authority governors on local school governing bodies/ Establish strong links with local County Councillor who should provide annual report to Community and Town Council/ Representation on outside local bodies
- By having a full complement of councillors and adhering to the "rules"/Contested elections with a diverse mix of councillors
- Working with minorities, schools, clubs and societies youth clubs and community safety links/ Working with other local organisations to add support and expertise and increasing success/ Facilitate meetings between providers and groups in community/ Liaise with neighbouring councils
- Regular newsletters, up to date website, drop ins. The most important thing is to listen to what residents say, want and feel/ Ensuring that they engage with their local community by asking questions, surveys, community events/ Regular interactive communication via councillor surgeries, annual reports, social media and the council website; calling public meetings over locally important issues, conducting a community needs assessment and other community development initiatives; conducting public consultation on council programmes, developing good communication links and networks with other public sector bodies, the third sector and community associations and organisations/ Use local papers to showcase the work
- Ensure Clerks and Councillors have skills for future demands/ Possessing a trained and dedicated team of members and staff with appropriate budget provision to sustain the required skill set.
- Look to promote the principles of sustainable development and the five key ways of working as identified in The Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. This should be universal for all local councils.
- Mandate the responsibility for community services to local councils or give them the powers to take on greater responsibility/ Never assume anything; research, check and verify – move then with confidence
- Encourage younger people to come forward – provide a different perspective/Involving the community in local projects, consulting the community on major decisions via a Town Plan. A website that is up to date and greater openness and accountability. We always encourage our community to attend council meetings and welcome those who do/By being proactive and responsive to local issues of concern/ More digestible way of public knowing what's going on rather than just publishing minutes on website
- Demonstrating democratic accountability by holding a regular cycle of meetings and being transparent and accountable with council business arrangements.
- Ensure there is scope for the use of the Welsh language in meetings to ensure everyone feels engaged and involved/ Safeguarding and promoting the use of the Welsh language.
- Maintaining a meaningful working budget with identifiable spending programmes and a

capital budget which is community driven.

- Preparing a place plan through consultation with local electors/ To have an active participation in local decision making arrangements including supporting the work programme of Public Services Boards at a local level; timely consultation responses to local planning issues and being able to develop supplementary planning guidance to support the local development plan; greater interaction with the fire, health and police services.
- Rewarding community innovation with grants/ Insist on publicity from groups for Community Council grants and funding for projects

Clearly the thrust of how councils feel they can ensure they best represent their local communities is through effective two way communication channels between them and their local electorates: this could be via public meetings, surgeries, regular newsletters, use of social media, provision of Annual Reports as well as listening to, encouraging and involving local electors in planning projects as well as ensuring they are provided feedback on outcomes and any benefits accrued; and finally by ensuring the council is well networked and represented on relevant outside bodies serving local electors interests. Ensuring local electors feel connected to local councils is the challenge for community and town councils and as already mentioned earlier in the response and acknowledged by One Voice Wales members better use of social media will be key to delivering this agenda moving forward given the levels of public usage and focus on this will be paramount for community and town councils.

There is however concern within the community and town council sector that enlargement of the present community and town council areas could dilute the strong sense of community feeling. Feedback suggests that the best representation will be achieved as locally focussed organisations drawing membership from their own communities. Member councils consider that there is a wide range of skills available in each community and the Community and Town Councils can and should draw from this pool. To enable this community and town councils should work with the community to encourage interest in local government and new interest from people to stand in local elections, thereby improving the democratic process. There is a recognition that more needs to be done to promote and educate the community on what the community and town councils do and who we are moving forward.

The UK government's austerity agenda and the impact on public finances in Wales means that unitary authorities are in the position of having to consider cutting services or transferring them to other bodies. The strong message from the focus group meetings held with councils in the course of the recent consultation in relation to the Community and Town Council Review Panel review was that the delegation of services was the most pressing and most important issue facing councils at the present time. Having a clear framework for service and asset devolution between community and town councils and County Councils will help local councils to ensure they best represent local residents when considering the transfer of public assets or services. One Voice

Wales is already involved in policy discussions on asset transfer and delegation of services but there is still considerable work required in order for community and town councils to be in a position to take on services.

One Voice Wales ongoing work for the community and town council sector will need to include the following priorities to ensure community and town councils have the right resources available to them to ensure they best represent their local communities. This includes:

- In collaboration with WLGA, WCVA, National Assets group, local authorities and other partners, supporting councils in responding to the delegation of services agenda;
- In collaboration with the Future Generation Commissioner for Wales office and organisations such as Cynnal Cymru, supporting larger councils with the requirements of the Wellbeing and Future Generations Act;
- Developing a policy position on the principles which should underpin the forthcoming LDBCW reviews of council areas;
- In collaboration with the Auditor General for Wales, identifying councils which are likely to need targeted support to enable them to comply with audit requirements;
- In collaboration with the SLCC developing an appropriate training / assessment programme for Clerks;
- In collaboration with relevant experts e.g. Participation Cymru; e.g. WCVA e.g. Electoral Commission Wales develop an action plan for increasing local interest in future community and town council elections;
- Continue to provide training, advice and support to councils to enable them to conduct business effectively. In collaboration with Planning Aid Wales continue to improve councils' ability to engage effectively with the planning process and the development of Place Plans as appropriate.

However it must be acknowledged by the Panel that the increasing breadth of support required by community and town councils is placing significant pressure on One Voice Wales to provide broader and deeper advice on technical matters relating to the growing areas of responsibilities of community and town councils.

One Voice Wales supports the overall proposed direction of travel – “we want all our Councils to be activist councils; engaged in delivering modern, accessible, high quality public services with their communities”. One Voice Wales and its member councils are committed to retain public services where possible although the sector recognises it needs additional capacity and tools to deal with the challenges ahead and that funding support was needed to enable local councils to deal with the possibilities of transfer of services and assets in the coming months and years.

Final comments:

One Voice Wales wish to express it's thanks to the Panel for the opportunity to offer views and opinions for consideration as part of the independent review.

Should the Panel consider it necessary or of value to further pursue or clarify any of the matters we have presented within this response, we would be pleased to assist.

Similarly, we would wish to express our thanks that the invitation has provided us with an opportunity to air and exchange views within the governance of One Voice Wales in preparing and agreeing our response.

Mr Lyn Cadwallader
Chief Executive, One Voice Wales

Appendix A - List of Consultation Events and Attendees

Caernarfon (Tuesday 28 November 2017 2pm – 4pm)

Llanystumdwy
Pwllheli
Llandwrog
Caernarfon
Llangefni
Bangor
Penrhyndeudraeth
Porthmadog
Dolbenmaen
Llanfair Mathafarn Eithaf
Criccieth
Menai Bridge

Chirk (Wednesday 29 November 2017 2pm – 4pm)

Chirk
Overton
Trelawnyd and Gwaenysgor
Montgomery
Llantysilio
Gresford
Mochdre with Penstrowed
Llandrillo
Gwersyllt
Mold

St Clears (Monday 4th December 6pm – 8pm)

Llangeler
Newcastle Emlyn
Llangennech
Manordeilo & Salem
Llangynnwr
Carmarthen
Solva
Narberth
East Williamston
Laugharne
Pembrey & Burry Port
Aberaeron

Ciliau Aeron
Llansantffraed
Merlins Bridge
Freystrop
St Clears
Lamphey & Freshwater
Penarth
Llanwenog
Llanstadwell

Howey (Monday 4th December 2018 2pm-4pm)

Llanfihangel Rhydithion
Vale of Grwyney
New Radnor
Nantmel
Rhayader
Talybont on Usk
Llandinam
Llandrindod
St Harmon
Newtown & Llanllwchaiarn
Churchstoke
Hay
Trefeglwys
Knighton
Llanfrynach
Abbey Cwmhir
Disserth & Trecoed
Presteigne & Norton
Old Radnor

Gorseinon (Monday 11th December 2018 2pm – 4pm)

Llandybie
Porthcawl
Grovesend
Llanedi
Pontarddulais
Clydach
Gowerton
Coedffranc
Tawe Uchaf
Gwaun Cae Gurwen
Mumbles
Gorseinon

Upper Killay
Three Crosses
Bridgend
Merthyr Mawr
Pennard
Pelenna
Cwmamman
Llanedi
Llannon
Mawr
Manorbier

Pencoed (Tuesday 5th December 6pm – 8pm)

St Georges & St Brides
St Donats
Llancarfan
St Fagans
Pentyrch
Pontyclun
Ewenny
Coychurch Lower
St Brides Minor
Llantwit Fardre
Coychurch Higher
Lisvane
Pencoed
Coity Higher
Tongwynlais

Henllys (Tuesday 5th December 2pm – 4pm)

Abergavenny
Penarth
Llangynidr
Llangybi Fawr
Croesyceiliog & Llanyrafon
Cwmbran
Penarth
Langstone
Magor with Undy
Caldicot
Monmouth
Henllys
Crickhowell
Shirenewton

Mathern
Blaenavon
Cruorney
Llanelly
Vale of Grwyney
Pontypool
Ponhir
Llanbadarn Fawr

Appendix 2 Capability and Capacity Framework

CAPABILITY AND CAPACITY BUILDING FRAMEWORK 2016-2023

VISION FOR THE COMMUNITY AND TOWN COUNCIL SECTOR

It is envisaged that community and town councils will play an active role in meeting the needs of communities and providing vital public services as a result of local government reform. In particular, the aim is that councils will deliver services which meet the needs of vulnerable groups in communities, such as children, young people and the frail elderly. (White Paper: Reforming Local Government: Power to Local People 3 February 2015)

PURPOSE OF THE FRAMEWORK

The framework will enable a strategic approach to be taken to ensuring the community and town council sector has the necessary capability and capacity to meet the challenges, and take advantage of the opportunities the sector faces.

A multi-year capacity and capability building framework will provide clarity and consensus on what additional support is required over the short, medium and long term. This will inform decisions on the areas where Welsh Government should target support each year, and what activity will be commissioned.

The purpose of the framework will be to:

- Identify what additional capability and capacity (skills, behaviours, knowledge and understanding) clerks and councillors will need
- Identify when this capability and capacity will need to be built

The framework will sit alongside the National Training Strategy, which seeks to improve the core knowledge and skills of councillors and clerks and establish a training culture.

FRAMEWORK

The framework adopts a phased approach, mapping out the capability and capacity requirements over the short, medium and long term. Some of the capability and capacity requirements will be specific to each phase whilst others will be cross cutting and require development throughout the period of the framework.

The skills, behaviours, knowledge and understanding can be broadly mapped under the following themes:

- Commercial and business management skills
- Expertise in provision of services and management of assets
- Understanding customer service and care
- Expertise in needs and support for specific groups
- Skills in engendering community cohesion
- Regulatory and legal expertise
- Leadership
- Staff management skills
- Fulfil role as an elected representative of the community
- Ability to manage change
- Professionalism
- Working in partnership

Phase 1: 2016/17; 2017/18

General capacity and capability development

This phase precedes the Boundary Commission reviews and the focus is on raising the capacity and basic skills of the whole sector. The specific drivers are building the capacity and capability to deal with the intermediate pressures of devolution of services and assets; to engage with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015; and encouraging and supporting a diverse range of people to stand as councillors.

- Increasing competence in commercial skills – ability to scrutinise proposals, probe evidence, critically appraise advice, develop plans and make well informed decisions.[Commercial and business management skills] [Expertise in provision of services and management of assets]
- Building skills and expertise in commissioning services [Expertise in needs and support for specific groups] [Expertise in provision of services and management of assets]
- Developing an understanding of alternative delivery models
- Developing the ability to set budgets, report on progress and produce annual reports [Commercial and business management skills]
- Encouraging people to stand for election in 2017 elections [Community leadership]
- Ensuring new councillors understand what is required of them [Fulfil role as an elected representative of the community]

- Enhancing leadership skills – learning to be proactive and setting direction. [Personal leadership]

Phase 2: 2018/19; 2019/20

This phase co-incides with the progress of the LDBCW's reviews; Community Councils will be making representations to the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales (LDBCW) in this period. . At this stage the proposed configuration of the community and town council sector will be starting to emerge. This will be an appropriate time to build specific capacity and capability to take on new powers and duties proposed in the Local Government Bill - councils wishing to make use of the general power of competence will be considering how to meet all three requirements; councils will also be considering how they will respond to the rights of the public when attending council meetings and participation at meetings. Capacity and capability to engage in the community engagement arrangements of the county council will also need to be considered.

- Ability to manage staff effectively [staff management skills]
- Increasing the number of qualified clerks
- Continuing to strengthen financial management and governance
- Starting to upskill clerks and staff who will be part of a much larger community council under new arrangements [Ability to manage change]
- Awareness of risk management [Regulatory and legal expertise]
- Awareness of social media [Ability to manage change]
- Partnership working / negotiation skills [Work in partnership]

Phase 3: 2020/2023

Transition to new community council arrangements

This phase follows the completion of the majority of the Boundary Commission's reviews. There will be a need to map the capability and capacity of existing councils against the recommended new arrangements and a move to a more targeted approach to address specific capability and capacity gaps . Capacity and capability building to make the transition to the new community councils arrangements once the outcome of the review is finalised.

- Ability to manage staff in larger organisations. [Staff management skills] [Leadership]
- Skills in handling staffing cuts and redundancies [staff management skills]
- Encouraging people to stand in 2023 elections.[Community leadership]

- **Upskilling clerks and councillors who are now part of a much larger community council.[Expertise in provision of services and management of assets]
[Understanding customer service and care]**
- **Ensuring new councillors understand what is required of them [Fulfilling role as representative elected to office]**
- **Ensuring new employees understand what is required of them**

Appendix 3

Bodmin Place Shaping Forum **Terms of Reference**

Purpose

The purpose of the Forum is to plan, discuss, prioritise, and where appropriate deliver or support the delivery of services within the Bodmin Community Network Area. The forum is designed to work together in partnership with each member representing their specific area of specialism, and ensuring wider engagement across all sectors.

The forum will have a broadly economic development focus, but have a wholistic view of this understanding that economy is linked, driven and dependant on all aspects of a community.

The Forum will develop a long term 2030 vision in order that the aspirations of the Bodmin area are captured, and developments are in line with this vision.

The forum will

- Exploring opportunities for joint working/funding.
- Run themed sessions to progress agreed priorities.
- Establish sub group/time limited working groups as appropriate
- Hold 2 stakeholder events each year in order to inform the wider group of developments

Bodmin Place Shaping Membership

The Forum will consist of one lead individual from each area listed below –

- Economy
- Arts and Culture
- Health and Wellbeing
- Sport and Physical Activity
- Heritage/Tourism
- Town Centre Focus
- Community Projects
- Housing and Transport
- Education Skills
- Community Network Panel
- Bodmin Town Council

These leads will be from the wider Bodmin Community and will be elected by the wider stakeholder group each year. Appropriate Cornwall Council Officers will be invited to attend these meetings as and when appropriate.

Bodmin Forum Meetings

- Six **Bodmin Place Shaping Forums** will be held each year, on a two monthly basis.
- The forums will be supported by Cornwall Council officers as and when appropriate
- The Forum should strive to reach consensus.
- Where a vote is necessary it will be on the basis of one member one vote. In the case where the Forum cannot reach a decision the Chair will have the casting vote.
- Agendas should be circulated 4 weeks prior to the meeting with the opportunity for items to be added up until 2 weeks before the Forum Meeting.
- The Forum Meetings will be held at a venue in the Bodmin area and will commence at 5.00pm.
- A Chair will be elected for a twelve month period.
- The meeting will be recorded by informal, brief notes, action points and a record of any formal decisions made.

The wider Stakeholder group meeting

In addition to the Forum meeting a wider stakeholder meeting will be held twice a year. These meetings will allow the Forum leads to report on progress, to take questions and comments from the stakeholders, and to gain a wider steer on developments.

The new leads will be appointed at this stakeholder meeting on an annual basis (???? Too often???? – may not allow much time for the leads to embed???)

Sub Groups/Working Groups

On occasions if an issue requires further work the Forum has the authority to set up a sub group or working group to progress this issue.

Informal Processes

It is anticipated that most activity will take place through day-to-day interactions between councillors, officers, groups, individuals and partner organisations. These "informal" processes are likely to be the most active components of the Forum and should always link/feedback to the Forum meetings.

PROGRESS ON COUNCIL REQUESTS – FTC 25.4.18

Write to Mon CC highways, re. parking at church road	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SK 2.2.18	Email correspondence between ward members/mcc officers
O Edwards – write to mon cc, CTC support 20mph - invite highways to meet with ward councillors	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SK 2.2.18	Email correspondence between ward members/mcc officers
A Easson – letter to Hoggin the Bridge committee/charity, ask who sent out invites, who is involved and why town council not included to presentation evening	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SK 2.2.18	No response received
Progress on bus shelters – invite MCC officers to meet	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SK 29.3.18	Meeting TBC (awaiting dates from officers)

Caldicot

Date	Type	Caption	Description
08/03/18 06:24:34	Review Footage	Caldicot Cam 188	Reviewed footage for camera 188 Caldicot Town Centre for 5th/6th March 2018 for Community Police Officer Hayley Brown. See control room e-mail 0620hrs 08/03/18.... TM
24/03/18 05:16:27	Monitor	Caldicot Cam 188	monitor male dressed in black clothing black balaclava and black rucksack. Male turned up on a moped.
24/03/18 19:37:30	Police In	Caldicot All Cams	Police log 347 24/3/18. Opps. IC1 MALE LATE 40S OF SLIM BUILD WITH SILVER GREY HAIR. He is wearing light blue jacket and jeans with white trainers. Last seen in ally way opposite Asda.
25/03/18 10:34:21	Incident Created	Caldicot	As requested TCBC Inc ID 79 created for incident 06/3/18 as discussed following previous discussions with Caldicot Officers
25/03/18 10:36:45	Police In	Caldicot	CO's James and Martin attend to collect footage Inc ID 79.
25/03/18 10:53:46	Police In	Caldicot	CO's James and Martin review footage for a male maturlabating in Caldicot Police log 347 Of 34/3/18 refers
26/03/18 23:38:04	Police Out	Caldicot	On HEITEL Alarm Monitoring system: 2x males sat by main door of Caldicot Castle sharing out some powder on the back of a mobile telephone and then snorting it Gwent Police contacted and Police Log 525 of 26/3/18 refers
26/03/18 23:56:03	Monitor	Caldicot	Entrance to Caldicot Castle until arrival of Police Officers Police log 525 26/3/18 refers

Caldicot Town Centre**Stakeholder Workshop No.3****6pm, Wednesday, 14th March 2018****Caldicot Community Hub****Present:****Councillors**

Cllr Kay Harris (Caldicot Town Council)

Cllr Maxine Mitchell (Caldicot Town Council)

Cllr Tony Easson (Caldicot Town Council/Monmouthshire County Council)

Cllr Alan Davies (Monmouthshire County Council)

Cllr Jo Watkins (Monmouthshire County Council)

Cllr Phillip Stevens (Caldicot Town Council)

Caldicot Town Team

Aaron Reeks

Cathy Edwards

Monmouthshire County Council Officers

Deb-Hill Howells

Cath Fallon

Jude Langdon

Consultant Team

Chris Jones

Chris Gentle

Hamish Munro

1. Apologies

None received.

2. Introduction

Chris Jones opened the meeting and thanked people for attending the last of three workshops provided as part of the town centre – moving from vision to delivery, process. The agenda for the workshop was outlined.

- Present 3 Key Projects
- Share costs and ways to fund
- Explain process from here
- Present Town Centre Regeneration Framework
- Discussion on Partnership Working and Delivery
- Reflections on Process

Before moving onto the three priority projects, Chris showed the importance of partnership working as evidenced in the successful green infrastructure capital bid to Welsh Government. This grant came about from the November walkabout that members of the stakeholder group participated in, with £50,000 now secured for improvements to Woodstock Way, Newport Road and Church Road. Chris

asked attendees to consider how representatives wished to get involved in the implementation of this project and respond to Jude Langdon at MCC.

3. Project Proposal

Chris Jones, Chris Gentle and Hamish Munro presented the final proposals with the following observations made by representatives.

Jubilee Way Scheme

- Chris Gentle stated that toilets are to be provided for with a preferred location on the eastern edge of the site. This would be subject to connections into the existing sewerage system within the site which would be subject to detailed design development;
- Cllr Kay Harris reiterated her concerns over loss of car parking due to the scheme; Chris Jones identified the need for the County Council to undertake a wider parking strategy for the town centres in order to understand current supply and demand from shoppers, visitors, residents and town centre employees.

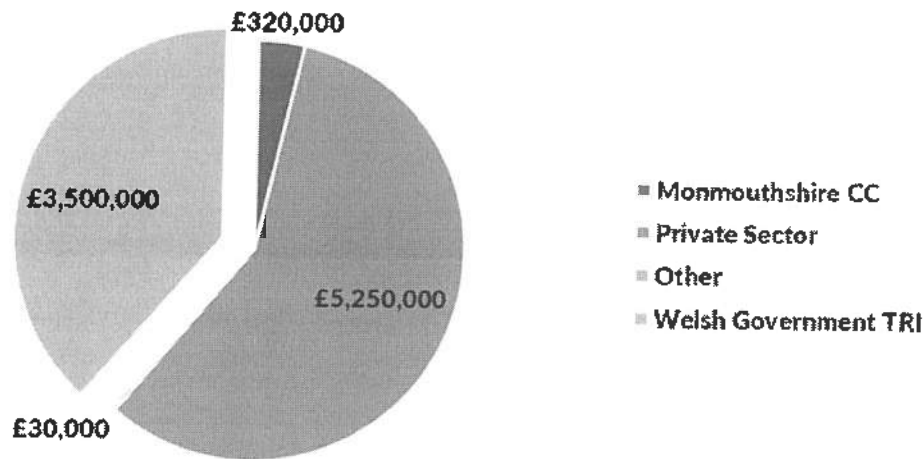
The Cross Destination Space

- Cllr Jo Watkins stated that due to research offered to her by the consultancy team on shared spaces, she was satisfied that there would no increased risks to pedestrians because of the shared space approach. Chris Gentle confirmed that further testing of design principles would be needed in next stage of design development.
- Cllr Tony Easson asked that a similar design be considered on the corner of Newport Rd and Jubilee Way which would address traffic speeds.

Newport Rd Retail Block Scheme

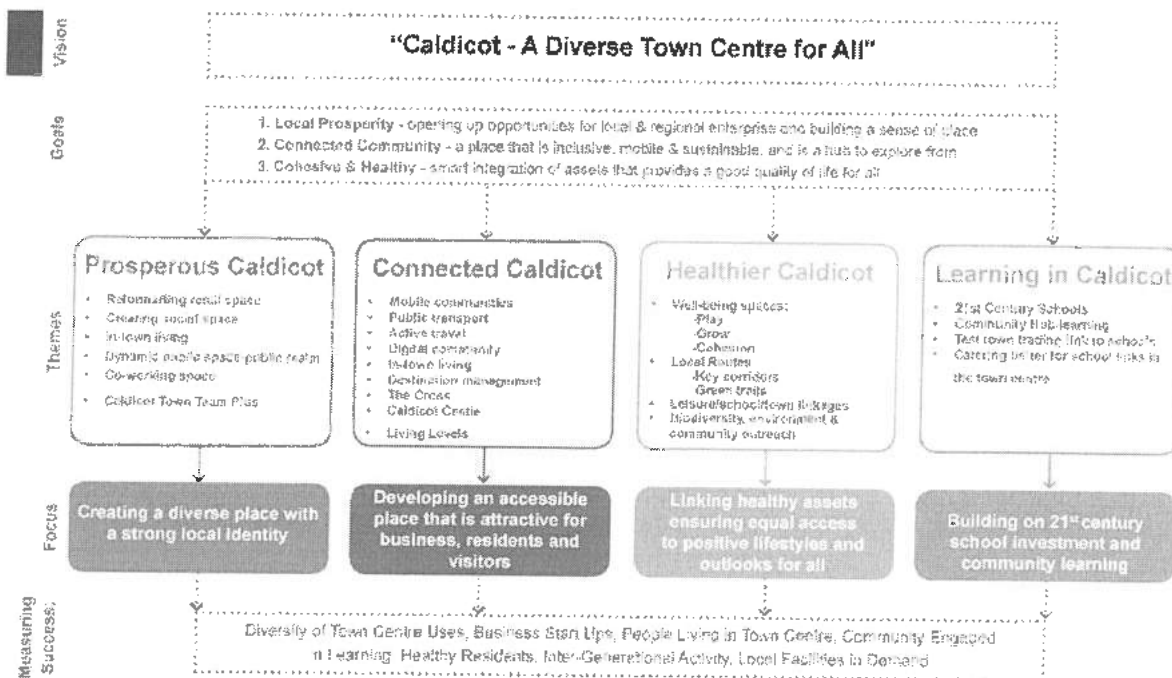
- Chris Jones informed the meeting that the original Enterprise hub idea had not been developed further due to the capacity of town centre organisations to deliver and run; in response a more comprehensive refurbishment of the retail block has been identified that would provide the opportunity to reconfigure units, enhance frontage as well as upper storey use, in addition to engagement with the immediate public realm. Such a scheme would form part of a package of negotiations with the owner going forward.

The three priority projects have been costed as part of an Order of Cost Estimate, with some indicative costs supplied for other secondary projects. At the time of the meeting, these totalled approximately £9million with the chart below showing where the funding could be met. Cath Fallon confirmed that due to Caldicot being a priority focus, a number of discussions with Welsh Government had taken place on their Targeted Regeneration Investment programme with an application due to be submitted before the summer. Chris Jones asked for stakeholders' support on the bid, specifically letters of support.



4. Regeneration Framework

Chris Jones outlined the wider regeneration framework for the town centre that is needed to enable physical integration with the immediate community as well as tackling wider prosperity issues.



He reiterated that the Green Infrastructure project was a good example of partnership working and saw the stakeholder group now broadening to include other groups and organisations. He asked the meeting to identify other organisations that may wish to get involved. Some suggestions included:

- Litter Picking group through the Town Council
- Community Garden group at the Castle
- Fred Weston, Community Co-ordination team

- Caldicot in Bloom
- Scouts and Guides
- Young people
 - Primary schools
 - Comprehensive school
 - Youth Council
 - Skate park users

5. Reflections on Process

Chris Jones asked the group for their reflection on the last six months. The following comments were received:

- | Positives/Successes | Concerns/Area for Further Attention |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Good process▪ Exciting▪ Interesting▪ Positive in what could be done▪ Retail block scheme is a major move▪ Bigger and better plans▪ Like the Cross Area▪ Huge potential but watch we don't raise expectations▪ Like the retail block▪ excited | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Will it sit on the shelf?▪ Need to find ways to change behaviour of shoppers and users▪ Challenge is bringing together castle and town centre▪ Business occupation▪ Don't just hang it on WG TRI▪ Communication is key with public▪ Don't like the housing scheme on Jubilee Way car park▪ Leadership for project – post March |

Chris stated that a short survey would be issued to representatives that had attended the process since October. This would be issued in April.

Cath Fallon stated that the Council were speaking to Chris Jones Regeneration about how support could be provided going forward.

Chris thanked the representatives for their commitment and time to the process over the last six months. He extended his thanks to Jude Langdon for her support from the County Council in terms of organisation and co-ordination over the last six months.

6. Main Action Points

- 1) Chris Jones to email copy of presentation to respective stakeholders; **Action CI**
- 2) Monmouthshire County Council to issue action plan framework document into April; **Action MCC**
- 3) Date of next stakeholder and wider partnership meeting to be organised over coming months; **Action MCC**

Meeting ended at 7-45pm.

Living the Levels

Welcome to the first edition of our 'Living the Levels' newsletter which will keep everyone who has expressed an interest in the Living Levels Landscape Partnership up to date. The Partnership aims to recapture, enhance and celebrate the unique Gwent Levels and has successfully been awarded a £2.5 million grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund.



Thank you to everyone who shared their views, ideas and stories. Your input has been key in progressing this project, so see inside for more opportunities to get involved!





Magor Marsh

Our journey so far...

The Living Levels Landscape Partnership (LLLP) has come together to deliver a programme of work which will promote and reconnect people to the heritage, wildlife and wild beauty of the historic landscape of the Gwent Levels.

The partnership is led by **RSPB Cymru** and includes: **Gwent Wildlife Trust, Natural Resources Wales, Newport City Council, Monmouthshire County Council, Cardiff Council, Gwent Archives, Cardiff Story Museum, Sustrans, National Trust, Bumblebee Conservation Trust and Buglife Cymru.**

The Programme seeks to conserve and restore the natural heritage of important features of the area, to develop a far greater appreciation of the value of the landscape through improving interpretation, promotion and access and finally to inspire people to learn about and participate in the heritage of the Gwent Levels.

Many other partners from the surrounding community will be involved informally with the project during its life and we are open to the formal partnership growing over the life of the scheme.

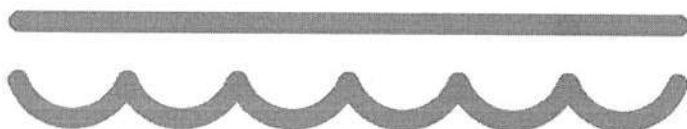
We are really grateful for your support so far and we hope this will continue over the next three and a half years as we rediscover the wonders of this amazing landscape.

A £2.5m grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund will help leverage in nearly £4m in funding for the scheme to be delivered over the next three and a half years

How do I get involved?

Between 2018 and 2021, 24 discrete but inter-related projects will be rolled out across the Gwent Levels area in South Wales. Read on for a taster of the different projects. There are many opportunities to get involved through volunteering, training and our programme of exciting events. From getting down and dirty with conservation activities, out and about walking and cycling or bringing together valuable research from the comfort of your own home – we like to think there's something for everyone.

Our next 'Living the Levels' will tell you more about getting involved with Living Levels projects as they get underway so please check your emails or your letter box!



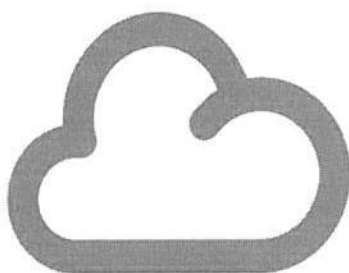
Events, skills and learning

Will there be events and activities that I can get involved with?

Whether you are interested in taking part as an individual or as a family group, from history talks to guided walks and creative activities, we are supporting a calendar of events throughout the seasons and across the Gwent Levels, including a 'Big Skies' arts project and Gwent Levels History Day.

What about learning?

As well as bringing the history and heritage of the Levels into schools and outdoor education, there will be a chance for people of all ages to learn new skills from traditional willow work through to GIS mapping and archive recording.



Wentlooge

Community

I love local history – how can I be involved?

We have some really exciting projects such as unearthing and collecting stories and oral histories, historical research and mapping, opening churches and finding creating ways to showcase the heritage of the Gwent Levels – in churches, in visitor hubs and in the landscape.

The Levels has a rich and fascinating history which we want people to celebrate, whether they are local or just visiting.

I am a Levels landowner is there anything for me?

From filled ditch clearance to orchard management and creating better habitats for wildlife and pollinators– we hope there's something that could benefit you. Plus we're looking for volunteers to help shape future farming practices and policy.

Contact us to find out more about funding and training opportunities.

My community is spoiled by fly-tipping – will you be tackling that?

Fly-tipping is a hot topic and we will be looking at how to bolster enforcement measures as well as working with local people to turn some of these 'black-spots' into 'bright-spots' by creating pollinator gardens.

So if you feel your community is affected then let us know and stay tuned for further updates.

We're looking for your stories...

We know there are loads of fascinating stories from the Levels - some of you have told us some great ones already- we'd like to record these and share them as they offer a great insight into the history and character of the Levels.

So if you have any outstanding memories or you would like to help collect these tales, then please get in touch.



Hendre Lake

Help spread the word!

If you think of someone, or a group of people, who might be interested in finding out more about Living Levels and getting involved, please do pass this newsletter on.

If you do not wish to receive further updates about Living Levels, then please let us know to unsubscribe you from this list

Check out our website for updates about the projects www.livinglevels.org.uk

Follow us on social media



@ourlivinglevels



Our Living Levels

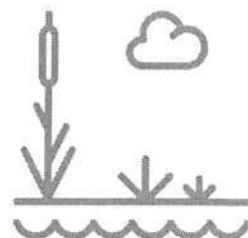
We'd love to hear from you!

If you've any questions about the programme or getting involved, drop us a line on:

Info@livinglevels.org.uk

or call us on:

01633 292982



**Lefelau Byw
Living Levels**