

**Town Clerk's Report June – July 2021 For Information**

This report provides an overview of work undertaken by Bridgend Town Council staff and information for councillors attention for the period from the June Town Council meeting to 15<sup>th</sup> July 2021.

**Council Work Priorities**

Since the last Town Council meeting the staff have worked on the following:

- Progress on Town Hall project (see detailed reports under agenda item 16)
- Completion of documentation required for submission of the external Audit 2021/22. Please note that queries from the external auditor will be dealt with over the summer period as they are received
- Preparation of agendas, multiple reports and minutes along with attending the following meetings:
  - 6<sup>th</sup> July – Finance Committee meeting
  - 7<sup>th</sup> July - Continuation of Community Engagement & Wellbeing Committee meeting
  - 12<sup>th</sup> July – Planning Committee meeting
  - 15<sup>th</sup> July – Linc Cymru Liaison meeting
  - 19<sup>th</sup> July – July Town Council meeting
- Actioned some resolutions from previous Council and committee meetings
- Finalised and arranged distribution of second edition of the Town Council newsletter
- Early planning for Remembrance events 2021 and an exhibition for the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the War Memorial
- Responded to a range of public enquiries, Freedom of Information requests and two Ombudsman complaints
- Co-ordinating weekly payment runs and salary payments and bank reconciliations
- Coordinating Service and Cyclical Maintenance at Carnegie House and the Town Hall buildings.
- Dealing with facilities and allotments matters and coordinating a wide range of outdoor maintenance work within the wards

**Newbridge Fields Benches**

At the June Town Council meeting a resolution was passed to obtain 3 quotes for Bridgend Town Council to purchase 5 new benches for Newbridge Fields at a cost of approximately £3000. As you are aware, the current benches are the property of BCBC and in the time since the last meeting, some of the benches have been repaired. The resolution made at the last meeting now needs further consideration and clarification for the staff to take it forward.

**Trespassing at the Town Hall**

There is an ongoing issue with people sleeping rough within the garden of the Town Hall. A few months ago, in an attempt to secure the property, metal heras fencing was installed around the covered patio area at the side of the building. Last week the brackets used to fix the heras fencing to the wall were unscrewed and two people have been sleeping rough under this covered area. The grit bin in the garden has been used as a toilet and the BTC Outdoor Team are having to wash down the area on a daily basis. We have spoken to the homeless people to explain that it is private property and that the behaviour is not acceptable. The matter has now been reported to the police as criminal damage.

To address this situation, on the grounds of health and safety, staff welfare and for the Council's building insurance, urgent action was required to secure the property. I liaised with the Mayor and Chair of Personnel and used my delegated authority to approve the cost of materials for The Outdoor Team to

purchase wood to construct a timber frame, fixings and hardy marine ply to board up the shelter. The cost of materials was just under £650. Construction will begin this week.

### **Town Centre Flower towers**

Unfortunately, since installing the flower towers in Bridgend Town Centre in May there have been at least ten separate incidents of vandalism of eight different flower towers. The Facilities Manager is keeping a log of the incidents and I am aware that some of the incidents have been reported to the police.

### **Impact of recent Covid-19 restriction changes**

Further to the Welsh Government announcement regarding Covid-19 restriction changes on 14<sup>th</sup> June there are a number of changes that impact the Town Council.

From 17 July, Wales will move fully to alert level one. There are some changes that are relevant to the Town Council including:

- Organised indoor events can take place for up to 1,000 seated and up to 200 standing.
- There is a specific requirement for employees to provide comprehensive information on the risks and mitigations identified in the COVID risk assessment with their employees.

If Wales moves to alert level zero on 7 August, all premises would be able to open and most (but not all) restrictions will be removed and replaced with the ongoing requirement for all organisations and businesses to carry out Covid risk assessments. These will determine what reasonable measures are needed to be put in place to keep workers, customers and visitors safe.

At alert level zero:

- There will be no legal limits on the number of people who can meet others, including in private homes, public places or at events.
- All businesses and premises will be able to reopen.
- Carrying out a coronavirus risk assessment will continue to be a legal requirement for businesses, employers and event organisers.
- Businesses, employers and other organisations will still be required to take reasonable measures to manage the risk of coronavirus at their premises.
- The reasonable measures to be taken, such as physical distancing and other controls, will be for each organisation to consider depending on the nature of the premises and the risks of exposure to coronavirus identified.
- People should continue to work from home wherever possible. If you are unwell you should self-isolate and get tested.
- Face coverings will remain a legal requirement indoors in public places, such as on public transport, in shops and when accessing healthcare.
- The use of face coverings in the workplace should also be considered by businesses and employers as part of their coronavirus risk assessment.

This means that if any Town Council meetings resume indoors from September (as proposed at the last Town Council meeting), Covid risk assessments are a legal requirement, physical distancing and room capacity will still need to be considered and as the meetings are held in public places, facemasks must be worn.

There is currently some confusion regarding the ability to hold a Council meeting in-person in relation to the new Local Government and Elections Act (Wales) 2021. This legislation includes a provision for remote meetings. It is unclear that if a Councillor, Youth Member, Co-optee or member of the public requests to

attend the meeting remotely and we unable to facilitate this when conducting a meeting 'in-person', the meeting may be unlawful. One Voice Wales are currently seeking clarification on this.

If there is a requirement to accommodate remote meetings with face to face meetings, the Council will need to consider what equipment will be needed to facilitate this and must ensure that all Councillors, staff and members of the public present can participate in the meeting and be heard by all with good quality sound and no audio interference or feedback. A budget may be required to facilitate this.

In relation to staffing, Welsh Government alert level one still requires people to continue to work from home wherever possible. As you are aware, we have a significant damp problem in the office and need to limit use of this room. Some staff are currently working from the building one or two days a week (on alternate days) as necessary. There have been suggestions about using the former Chamber and board room area at Carnegie House for staff that would prefer to work from the building more regularly. As there are no fixed network points in these areas, staff would need to bring in a laptop and connect to the cloud wifi. This arrangement is optional and a risk assessment would need to be prepared for this method of working before this approach is used.

### **Remembrance Events 2021**

The relaxation of Covid-19 restrictions for outdoor events indicates that the Remembrance parades and services may be able to go ahead in a similar way to previous years, with some additional requirements such as Covid risk assessments and additional health and safety measures in place.

At this point, it is difficult to predict how the pandemic will evolve during autumn 2021 and what government restrictions and social distancing measures could be in place in November. With this in mind, contingency plans will still need to be prepared.

I have been informed that our usual parade marshal has transferred from the Royal Navy to the RAF and may not be available for the Bridgend parade this year. The parade marshal provides the Remembrance parade drill instructions and is very experienced in organising the large number of people in the Sunday Remembrance parade. He usually ensures that everyone is placed in the correct position in the limited space around the War Memorial and that they are in the correct order to march off following a one way system to march back out of the town centre. The BTC Military Advisor is currently speaking to the Royal Navy about the provision of another parade marshal and is also undertaking training to carry out the role himself as a back up.

Preparations are also underway for a week long exhibition to mark the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Bridgend War Memorial. The event is being planned with Covid-19 restrictions in mind and will take the form of a physical installation that can be viewed via a one-way system on the ground floor of Carnegie House. The Community Engagement Team will be liaising with local groups and historians to progress this project over the coming months.

An extraordinary meeting of the Community Engagement Committee may be necessary at the beginning of September to discuss plans for Remembrance events 2021.

### **Summer Recess & Annual Leave**

The Town Council summer recess will take place in August, however, the Planning Committee meeting will go ahead on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> August and a Town Hall Working Group meeting may also be required. Traditionally Town Council staff book annual leave during this period however we try to ensure that there is adequate cover throughout the month.

**Agenda Item 10**

**Town Council meeting July 2021**

Leanne Edwards  
Town Clerk