

Town Clerk's Report July – September 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 July Town Council meeting to 21st September 2021.

Unfortunately, at the end of July we experienced a significant IT issue at Carnegie House and the network was down in the building for over two weeks. Various site visits were arranged with BT and new hardware has now been installed to rectify the situation.

The Local Government & Elections Act (Wales) 2021 has introduced new regulations and some time has been spent clarifying the new legislation and researching ways to deliver hybrid Council meetings in the future. This information is provided as part of the agenda for your consideration.

Research has been conducted on the new regulations for arranging events in Wales in relation to planning a Civic Service for the Mayor on 3rd October. This information is provided as part of the agenda for your consideration.

Unfortunately, there was a significant issue with the renewal of the Town Council insurance policy during late August and September and this caused a significant amount of additional work to source new quotes, respond to insurer questions and co-ordinate additional Council meetings.

The team have been working through resolutions of previous Council meetings and I can inform you that a Section 27 notice has been issued to BCBC to bring the Craig-Y-Parcau lease to a formal end.

The BTC Acting Facilities Manager attended the Bridgend Town Centre ASB Management meeting on 02.08.2021. Minutes of the meeting can be forwarded on request.

Town Hall & Sunnyside Development

The Town Hall Refurbishment Project has progressed well throughout the summer months and there is a range of information for Members to consider as part of the meeting agenda.

Unfortunately, there have been a number of security issues at the Town Hall building with the alarm going off out of hours, local residents reporting incidents and people sleeping in tents within the grounds of the property. The police have been notified about anti-social behaviour problems at the site.

At the latest Linc Cymru meeting the following update was provided:

- Linc Cymru advised that they had two options for arranging a new contractor for the Sunnyside development
 - To award a direct contract to a company that participated in the initial tender process
 - To re-tender for the contract
- Linc Cymru and the Health Board both agreed that the tender should be readvertised due to the size and value of the contract.
- The contract will be advertised by Open Tender and it is anticipated that the tender process will conclude by the end of December.
- New surveys and site inspections will then be undertaken in January/February and construction work should start back on site at the end of February or beginning of March.
- The current situation with the shared access road was discussed. Linc Cymru advised that the steel plates are still in situ to make the road safe and type 1 fill material is being imported to fill the trench.
- Linc advised that they arranged for the strimming of the verge near the access road however this will not need to be done again due to the autumn/winter season.

- Linc Cymru are trying to make arrangements to replace the current manned guard with 24 hour security cameras. A request has been submitted to BTC to assist with a temporary metered electricity connection at the Town Hall building to power security cameras on the Sunnyside site. It is proposed that a sub-meter is installed along with the temporary connection to record units used. It's likely to be modest usage but Linc Cymru can also contribute to standing charges as this option is much preferred to a temporary generator which may cause noise for local residents. This has been included on the agenda for consideration.
- The removal of the temporary accommodation previously used by WRW has been arranged for Monday – Wednesday of next week. The company have been given specific instructions on the route to minimise disruption to residents. Apart from this, there should be no other deliveries or movement on site.
- The issue of insulation blowing off site and into Sunnyside Lane was raised. Linc Cymru have weighed down some loose insulation on site but will carry out another inspection to insure that any remaining loose materials are removed or weighed down so that it does not cause a nuisance over the winter months.

If any Members have issues that you would like me to raise with Linc Cymru please let me know.

New Website Project

Good progress has been made with the new website project and the Community Engagement Team has dedicated a significant amount of time to the tender process and responding to queries. Sixteen invitations to tender were sent out to web design companies who were selected based on research conducted by the whole team. Tender responses have been evaluated and a report with recommendations is included on the agenda for discussion.

Carnegie House Arts Centre

The Community Engagement and Event Team have continued to keep BTC social media channels updated with regular posts and mindfulness segments were provided on the Carnegie House Facebook page for parents and children during the summer months. The French and Spanish course will be delivered online again for the autumn season due to feedback from existing learners favouring the delivery of the classes remotely at present. French starts on 27th September and Spanish on 28th September. The information is on the Carnegie House Facebook page and Members are encouraged to share the posts as much as possible.

Textile tutor, Karen Teal has done a brilliant job of running the textile class online but has now relocated to Scotland and is concentrating on her work as an artist. We have a new textile tutor, Alison Moger, ready to take over when the classes restart at Carnegie House. The team have also been liaising with other tutors and many of them are keen to return to face-to-face learning and classes.

We have had several enquiries regarding room hire and we have informed everyone that decisions will be made regarding the reopening of Carnegie House at the next Council meeting. There is an item on the agenda and an accompanying report for your consideration.

Remembrance Events

Over the summer the team have also prepared all the paperwork for the Remembrance events including the Event Safety Advisory Group (ESAG) notification forms and the formal Road Closure application. Unfortunately, there have been a number of changes since the last event in 2019 which has resulted in the need to seek new suppliers and find new ways to arrange the road closure. The Community Engagement and Events Manager has prepared an Event Management Plan and we have allocated work throughout the team.

Christmas 2021

Planning has also started for Christmas activities 2021. Quotes are being sought for Christmas lights. The brass band bus has been booked for December 12th and the Community Engagement Team have started planning for a 'Christmas Trail' for children to follow in the town. A meeting has been held with Bridgend Lions Club and they are keen to go ahead with a grotto at Carnegie House (with Covid-19 safe adjustments in place). I am attending a meeting with the Community Engagement Manager, Facilities Manager and BCBC Officer on 30th September to discuss Christmas events and the Covid-19 measures that need to be taken into account.

The next BTC Newsletter is scheduled to go out after Remembrance and before Christmas so that we can include a piece on Remembrance with photographs of the event and promote Christmas activities.

Throughout the summer period we have had lower staffing levels due to annual leave and bereavement, however the team have worked together to cover absences and I am very grateful to the staff for their efforts and support during these difficult circumstances.

Town & Community Council News

This month a report from the Trussell Trust highlighted an unprecedented demand in the use of foodbanks in the fallout from the pandemic. Following this, The Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) has reported that Parish and Town Councils are becoming increasingly involved in tackling food poverty at a local level by supporting emergency food provision through various mechanisms including allocating regular funding, arranging deliveries on behalf of food banks and donating food. This may be something that the Town Council would like to discuss in the future.

Planning for the 2022/23 Budget

Town Council committee meetings are due to resume in October and many of the committees will need to make decisions on projects for next financial year and prepare a budget request for the Town Council precept discussion in November.

Upcoming meetings:

- Community Engagement & Wellbeing Committee (Remembrance Only) – 29th September
- Finance Committee – TBC (postponed from 7th September)
- Facilities Committee – TBC (postponed from 15th September)
- Regeneration Committee – 4th October
- Planning Committee – 11th October
- October Town Council meeting – 18th October
- Personnel Committee – 22nd October
- Community Engagement & Wellbeing Committee – 27th October

Please Note: The next Bridgend Armed Forces Covenant Forum is scheduled to take place on 21 October 2021 14:00 – 15:30. If a representative of BTC would like to attend please let me know.

Leanne Edwards
Town Clerk