**CAERPHILLY TOWN COUNCIL**

**ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22**

This Annual Report was considered and approved by the Town Council on 25 April 2022 (minute 110.3).

**Council Organisation**

The Town Council comprises the two principal wards of Morgan Jones and St Martins and includes Caerphilly town centre and Caerphilly Castle. There are 12 town councillors representing the community areas of Tonyfelin, Parcyfelin, Bryncenydd, Watford, Twyn, Castle and Cwrt Rawlins (see website for details). The full council meets once a month (apart from August and December) and agendas and minutes can be viewed on the website. All council meetings are open to the public. The council has been meeting remotely during the pandemic but with the lifting of restrictions hybrid meetings were introduced in February 2022. The council has no sub committees and all decisions are made by the full council. There are two working groups - the Events Working Group and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Working Group. They discuss operational issues and can make recommendations to the full council when member decisions are required.

Anyone wishing to contact the Town Council can do so through the Town Clerk by email or telephone. The Town Council operates flexible office hours. It is possible to arrange a meeting with the Town Clerk Mon to Fri in person, although most enquiries can usually be dealt with over the telephone or by email.

 Email: caerphillytowncouncil@outlook.com

 Tel: 07950935822

**Financial Information**

The budget for 2021/22 was approved by the Town Council in November 2020 on the assumption that it would be a near normal year in respect of expenditure. This has not proved to be the case and at the July meeting of the Town Council the decision was taken to cancel the fireworks display at Caerphilly Castle, the Christmas lights switch on event, and Christmas Lantern Parade for the second year, in light of the prevailing circumstances with the pandemic. This proved to be the right call with emergence of the omicron variant towards the end of 2021.

Income was lower than the original budget as there was no fireworks sponsorship and no street collection. Income was £103,676. The majority (94%) of the income is from the council tax precept This is the equivalent of £15-50 for Band D property. The running costs for the council (staff costs, member allowances, administration, rent, rates, IT insurance, audit fees) amounted to £34,000. Around £52,000 was spent on various activities which included the floral decorations in the town centre during the summer, the Christmas lights, autumn sports scheme, donations to the Mayor’s charities (as there was no fireworks street collection), renewal of the floodlights at St Martins Church.

Savings arose on a number of budget headings including sponsored events, the cancellation of the fireworks display and the Christmas Lantern Parade. The savings were offset by various virements including video conference equipment, office door security video intercom and repairs to the floodlights at St Martins Church. There was a surplus of income over expenditure of £17,395. Total balances carried forward into 2022/23 are £111,793 made up of operational reserves, restricted reserves and money held in the current account. The Town Council does not own any land or buildings but has office equipment and other items with a net asset value of £85,500.

**Relationship with principal council**

A charter governing the relationship between the principal council (CCBC) and the town and community councils within Caerphilly County Borough has been agreed. This sets out the responsibilities for exchange of information, liaison, and consultation on specific subjects. There is an established Community Council Liaison Sub Committee which holds quarterly meetings. The Town Council’s nominated representative on this committee was town councillor J Hibbert.

The Town Council has not entered any discussions with the principal council in respect of asset or service transfers.

**Training Plan**

After the election in May 2022 a training needs assessment will be undertaken to help inform the preparation of a training plan. To meet the new statutory requirement the training plan will be published prior to the deadline of 5th November 2022.

**Audit**

The audit of accounts for the year ended 31st March 2021 was completed on 25th January 2022. The Annual Return can be viewed on the Town Council’s website. The Auditor General for Wales gave an unqualified audit opinion.

“No matters have come to my attention giving cause for concern that in any material respect the information reported in the Annual Return:

* has not been prepared in accordance with proper practices
* that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met
* is not consistent with the Council’s / Committee’s governance arrangements; and
* that the Council / Committee does not have proper arrangements in place to secure economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in the use of resources.”

**Activities**

The Town Council undertakes a range of activities. The council is responsible for arranging the floral displays in the town centre during the summer, organising the fireworks display at Caerphilly Castle, the Christmas lights, Christmas tree, and funding the Lantern Parade. Sponsorship is provided to a number of other events in the town organised by other organisations. The council operates a small grants scheme to support local clubs and societies that include members who are resident in the town area covered by the council. The council is a consultee on planning applications that are submitted within the council’s area. It may also be consulted on other policies and proposals by the principal council. The town councillors liaise closely with Gwent Police on community safety and will pursue issues of concern raised by residents.

The normal range of activities have been affected by the pandemic and the events programme was cancelled, together with all the sponsored events apart from the Caerphilly Arts Competition.

The normal range of events, launches, openings attended by the Mayor were significantly curtailed due to the pandemic.

The council has changed its working arrangements enabling remote access meetings, staff working from home and has invested in new IT to enable hybrid arrangements for a new post pandemic way of working offering greater flexibility for staff, councillors and the public.

The council has considered a report on the new duties that arise from the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and will be making arrangements to meet the new duties as these come into effect in 2022. These new duties cover:

* General power of competence
* Multi location meetings
* Public participation at public council meetings
* Preparing and publishing an annual report
* Preparing and publishing a training plan

The council does not intend to pursue the general power of competence at the present time. Reliance will continue to be placed on specific legal powers and the general power under section 137 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972.

**Priorities for 2022/23**

It is anticipated that Welsh government will have lifted most of the pandemic restrictions before the new financial year commencing in April 2022. The council is therefore planning to restore the events programme. A budget expenditure of £139,500 has been approved which is a higher projected expenditure than in 2021/22. However, provision has been made for the cost of the elections in May 2022 (£12000). Income is projected at £111,400 resulting in an excess of £28,100 of expenditure over income. A contribution of an equivalent amount from carried forward reserves has been agreed to achieve a balanced budget.

There is an unallocated amount of £4,200 in the restricted reserves (CIL) which is available to support a capital project.

An induction will be arranged for all members elected to the council in May 2022.

Mike Prew

Town Mayor on behalf of the Town Council