**Agenda Item 8.3**

**Report to Town Council 15 May 2023**

**Annual Report**

**(Deferred from Town Council meeting 17 April 2023)**

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 (section 52) imposed a statutory requirement for town and community councils, as soon as reasonably practicable after the end of each financial year, to prepare and publish an annual report about the council’s priorities, activities and achievements over the previous year. The first annual report for the 2021/22 financial year was published in April 2022. The report for the financial year 2022/23 is now due.

There is no prescribed template for a community council annual report, but the format should reflect what the council does. Generally, the report is expected to provide information about the council, explain the work, reflect on the past year’s activity and look ahead to the coming year. It is for the Town Council to consider and approve the annual report, the decision cannot be delegated to a committee or officer.

It is recommended that Members consider and subject to any amendments approve the annual report in the attached appendix and publish the document on the website.

Phil Davy

Town Clerk

**Appendix**

**Annual Report 2022/23 – Caerphilly Town Council**

**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. Elections were held in May 2022 and as a result 6 councillors were re elected from the previous administration and 6 new councillors were elected (see website for detail). The Town Council meets once a month (apart from August and December) and agendas and minutes can be viewed on the website. All Town Council meetings are open to the public. Since February 2022 meetings are arranged on a multi location basis enabling in person attendance at the Twyn Community Centre or remote access via the internet. For virtual attendance the Town Council uses Zoom.

The Town Council has no sub committees and all decisions are made by the full council. There are two working groups – Events Working Group and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Working Group. They discuss operational issues and can make recommendations to the Town 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](mailto:caerphillytowncouncil@outlook.com)

Telephone: 07950035822

**Financial Information**

The budget for 2022/23 was approved by the Town Council in November 2021. Events and activities are almost back to normal after the pandemic. The one exception was the fireworks display at Caerphilly Castle which did not take place for a third year. The event was unable to take place in 2022 due to building and conservation works at the Castle resulting in the non-availability of the launch site on the hornwork.

Income of £106,733 was lower than the original budget due primarily to the absence of the fireworks display as there was no sponsorship or street collection. There was also a lower than budgeted CIL receipt. The reductions were offset by a higher VAT reclaim from the previous year. The majority of the income (91%) is from the council tax precept. This 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 £33,800. Around £50,000 was spent on various activities which included the Flower Festival, the town centre summer floral decorations, the Christmas lights switch on event, the Lantern Parade and donations to the Town Mayor’s charities (as there was no fireworks street collection). The elections in May 2022 incurred a cost of £9932. Total payments were £114471. This included £8328 on projects funded from restricted reserves (CIL account). When this is taken into account expenditure was matched by income. Total balances carried forward into 2023/24 are £105,580.

Inflation pressures will impact on expenditure during 2023/24 and it can be anticipated that all suppliers will be increasing prices which will impact on events and other activities. In setting a budget for 2023/24 the Town Council decided not to increase the precept which has now been held at the same level for the last three years. However in order to achieve a balanced budget it will be necessary to allocate £27,154 from the balances.

The Town Council does not own any land or buildings but has office equipment and other items with a net asset value of £86,465.

**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 is town councillor P J Bevan.

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

The Town Council is a statutory consultee on planning applications within Morgan Jones and St Martins Wards.

**Training Plan**

The majority of town councillors attended an induction following the election in May 2022. A training plan has been published on the website and will be reported annually at the AGM.

**Audit**

The audit of accounts for the year ended 31 March 2022 has not been completed by Audit Wales as they continue to seek information from the Town Council on transactions undertaken during 2021-22. The audit has been ongoing since the submission of the Annual Return in May 2022. All the financial records for the year subject to audit were deposited with Audit Wales in August 2022. The Annual Returns can be viewed on the Town Council’s website.

**Activities**

The highlights of the year have been the return of the Flower Festival in June, winning a Gold Medal in the Wales in Bloom competition, a very well attended Christmas Lights switch on event with entertainment from local school choirs, and the combined Christmas Market and Lantern Parade in early December. Sponsorship was provided to the Food Festival, Megaday, and the Little Cheese.

The Town Council operates a small grants scheme to support local organisations and societies that include members who are resident in the town area covered by the council. Grants range from £150 to £400.

As well as a consultee on planning applications CCBC may consult on other policies and proposals such as the development plan, and the regeneration strategy for Caerphilly town. The town councillors liaise closely with Gwent Police on community safety and will pursue issues of concern raised by residents.

The Town Mayor attends events, launches, openings and welcomes invitations.

The Town Council has adopted the duties that have come into effect from the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. Working arrangements have been changed enabling remote access meetings, home working, and invested in IT offering greater flexibility for staff, councillors, and the public.

The Town 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 2023/24**

The Town Council is hoping to run a full events programme in 2023/24 including the fireworks display at the Castle. A decision on the latter will be made in June 2023 and is dependent on the position with the ongoing works programme at the Castle. The Town Council is hoping for another successful entry into the Wales in Bloom competition. There will be a challenge to manage the inflationary pressures within the budget. The approved expenditure estimate for 2023/24 is £135,711. The income estimate is £108,557. As the income is less than the expenditure a contribution from the carried forward balances is necessary for a balanced budget.

There will be a review of unallocated CIL funds following the annual contribution from CCBC in June and current priority projects will be reassessed.

Progress with the action plan that resulted from the application of the Health Check in the Finance and Governance Toolkit will be updated and this will be considered alongside the outcome of the audit on the 2021/22 financial year.

The Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales will be undertaking a review of the community arrangements during 2023. Boundary changes may mean adjusting the boundary of an existing community, or the abolition of an existing community, and / or the creation of a new community. Draft proposals are expected to be published in the summer. The Town Council will respond as appropriate to any proposed changes that impact on the 7 existing community wards (Ton y Felin, Parc y Felin, Bryncenydd, Watford, Twyn, Castle, Cwrt Rawlins) covering the Town Council area.

Mike Prew

Town Mayor on behalf of the Town Council