THE COMMUNITY COUNCIL OF ABERTILLERY & LLANHILLETH
CYNGOR CYMUNED ABERTYLERI A LLANHILEDD

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Our Ref: **NOTICE OF MEETING** 9 January 2019

Dear Councillor

You are summoned to attend a meeting of the Council of Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council, to be held in the Council Chamber, Mitre Street, Abertillery on **Wednesday 16 January 2019 at 5.30pm**. The agenda for the meeting is set out below.

The Council may suspend standing order 1(z) if it wishes the meeting to last beyond two hours, at the appropriate point in the meeting.

Yours sincerely

Richard Gwinnell
Town Clerk

COUNCIL AGENDA
WEDNESDAY 16 JANUARY 2019 at 5.30pm

1. **Apologies for absence and welcomes**
   To receive apologies for absence from Councillors and welcome new attendees.

2. **Declarations of interest or dispensations**
   Members who consider that they have an interest to declare are asked to state the item in which they have an interest and the nature of the interest. Any member who is unsure should seek advice prior to the meeting in order to expedite matters at the meeting itself.

3. **Transforming Landscapes and Identities in the South Wales Valleys**
   To receive a verbal presentation from Dr David Llewellyn.

4. **Minutes: Council 12 December 2018** (attached)
   To confirm the minutes of the above meeting as a correct record.

5. **Questions from the public**
   To receive questions from the public and provide answers where possible.

6. **Budget and Precept 2019/20** (attached)
   To agree the budget and precept for the financial year ahead.

7. **Solar Farm Grants** (attached)
   To discuss the proposals submitted by members and decide next steps.

8. Resolution to exclude the press and public

Members are recommended to consider and resolve that, by virtue of The Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the press and public are excluded from discussions on the following items on the basis that disclosure thereof would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

9. Christmas lights provision

To consider the above.

Agenda Item 4

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF ABERTILLERY AND LLANHILLETH COMMUNITY COUNCIL (ALCC) HELD ON 12 DECEMBER 2018 at 7.00pm in the Council Chamber, Mitre Street, Abertillery

PRESENT: Councillors:

Peter Adamson, Steve Bard, Keri Bidgood, Gill Clark (Vice Chair) (in the Chair), Roger Clark, Tracey Dyson, Mark Lewis, Perry Morgan, Gary Oakley, Rob Phillips, Allen Rees, Nick Simmons and Bernard Wall

Officers: Steve Edwards, Deputy Clerk and Richard Gwinnell, Town Clerk

Others: None

ABSENT: Councillors Ivor Beynon, Julie Holt (Chair), Glyn Smith, Graham White and Trudy Williams

154. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Beynon, Holt, White and Williams.

155. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Bard declared a personal interest in agenda item 14 (grants) as he was involved in the Abertillery Orpheus Choirs, which were applying for grant funding.

156. POLICE UPDATE

The Clerk circulated an update received from the Police, since the agenda was issued. A copy is attached to the minute book. Members took a few minutes to read the update.

Comments were made about continuing problems with sheep wandering freely in Bourneville, parking on Roseheyworth Hill and Gladstone Street, a number of burglaries in Bourneville and people drinking late at night in a lane. Members were encouraged to report issues to the Police directly, when they occurred. The Clerk was asked to find out more information about the Ebbw Fach Crime Prevention Panel (e.g. what it was, its membership, when it met etc) and let members know by email.

Councillor Wall arrived at this point.

Council RESOLVED to note the update.

157. MINUTES – COUNCIL MEETINGS – 7 AND 21 NOVEMBER 2018

Council RESOLVED:

(1) that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 7 November 2018 (budget issues) be confirmed as a correct record, for signature by the Chair

(2) that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 7 November 2018 (non-budget issues) be confirmed as a correct record, for signature by the Chair

(3) that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 21 November 2018 be confirmed as a correct record, for signature by the Chair, subject to the following changes:

- page 4, minute 131, penultimate paragraph: add the words "The point of order was passed over." before the words "Following further brief discussion:"
- page 6, minute 135, last paragraph: add the words ", called a point of order" before the words "and left the meeting at this point".

158. MINUTES – HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 7 AND 21 NOVEMBER 2018

Council RESOLVED to note the minutes of the Human Resources Committee meetings held on 7 November and 21 November 2018 (which had already been confirmed as correct by the HR committee).

159. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

There were no public questions for this meeting.

160. COUNCIL ACTION LIST

Questions were asked and replies given about progress on the cleaning of the Abertillery war memorial and liaison with Aberbeeg Community Centre about storage.

Council RESOLVED:

(1) to note the updates shown in the action sheet and the good progress being made
(2) to remove item 252(3) (28.3.18) from the action sheet, as discussions had taken place and Aberbeeg Community Centre would use their own storage space.

161. REPORT ARISING FROM THE HUMAN RESOURCES (HR) COMMITTEE HELD ON 21 NOVEMBER 2018

The Clerk circulated an amended page 30, which listed the members of the HR Committee and stated that the report was presented by the Chair, on their behalf.

In the absence of the Chair, the Vice-Chair presented and outlined the report in detail, highlighting the options identified by the HR Committee for Council to decide upon.

Discussion ensued, with the following main points arising:

- too much was being asked of the Council's two part time officers
- the Council needed an Admin Assistant to undertake admin tasks and also work experience students or short-term project staff for particular periods or projects
- councillors should be doing more basic research and "legwork", not staff
- the staff should be used only where their admin, skills or experience warranted it, and not for work which members should be doing themselves
- members should have a laptop, to use in the office for appropriate tasks

- staff should have proper hours, not be on zero hours contracts for example
- employing staff on an hourly basis was not a viable option
- members who worked full time could not come in and work on projects
- more detail was needed on how many staff / hours were required, before budget setting; could staff report back on how many staff / hours were needed
- this was not possible, without the Council knowing first what it wanted to deliver
- the Council should be able to extend staff hours or pay overtime if the Council wanted more done and existing staff were able to work extra hours
- the Council should pay the least amount possible for extra staff/hours
- putting limits on the timeframe in which staff could take time off in lieu was not a viable option; this would mean staff could be told to take time off by the end of a month, even if deadlines needed to be met; this could result in failure to deliver on time
- staff had worked over and above for ALCC and would not do so again if they lost the hours they had worked or were forced to take days off at an unsuitable time
- allowing time off in lieu (TOIL) to be carried forward until it could be used had worked to date but was not sustainable going forward, given the rising demands
- overtime only worked if staff were available to work it, and staff had to be paid; a combination of overtime payments and TOIL was therefore the only option
- who authorised overtime (currently none was paid, but it had been, up to two years ago) and why overtime was necessary
- the new appraisal form was better than the old one, but the old form was not "unfit for purpose".

Staff were asked for and gave their views about the options put forward in the report.

Council RESOLVED:

(1) to consider the cost-effective use of officer time as part of all future decision making, including decision making about the budget and potential future projects
(2) to consider further in due course the options highlighted by the HR Committee including overtime payments, employment of hourly paid project staff, the possibility of employing an Admin Assistant and the possibility of work experience placements
(3) (with two members abstaining from the vote and the rest in favour) to use a mixture of overtime payments and time off in lieu (TOIL) in future
(4) to adopt the proposed new appraisal form.

162. WELL-BEING WORKING GROUP (WBWG) REPORT

Councillor Simmons (Chair of the WBWG) referred to the additional papers he had circulated and explained (main points):

- Councillor Phillips was in fact the lead member for "regeneration of recreational facilities", with Councillor Williams as the Deputy (the paper issued was wrong)
- "Making getting to school safer" was not being taken forward at this stage
- it would be good to have more members actively involved in projects
- Blaenau Gwent had made clear that a long-term over-arching project would be a good idea
- the possibility of an out of town retail centre/railway station for Abertillery was the

most significant long-term project currently being considered by the WBWG

- he and others had met with Alun Davies AM (then a Welsh Government Minister) to discuss this
- there was no immediate prospect of getting a railway station at Abertillery
- it may be more likely if there were 4 trains per hour running on the Ebbw Vale line (instead of the current 2 trains per hour) and if Abertillery also had an out of town retail/leisure complex to attract visitors
- if well-being projects were to be progressed, more powers were needed, e.g. to enable members to meet with outside organisations/partners and speak to them with a degree of authority and to enable project leaders to get on with planning.

Councillor Oakley stated that a railway station at the Aberbeeg junction had been suggested by the Assembly Member, but there was no car parking at the Aberbeeg site and this would render a station at Abertillery even less likely in future. He proposed that a Well-being Committee be formed, with powers to get on with working up projects and meeting with partners. The committee could report back to Council periodically on progress. It could also appoint sub-committees as needed.

The Clerk reminded members that committees required agendas, published a week in advance, minutes, reports, staff attendance, meetings which were open to the press and public and proper terms of reference/powers.

Other members referred to the need to open the building specially for additional evening committee meetings and to budget for extra evening working (overtime or TOIL). It was suggested that meetings be held quarterly, on the same day as Council meetings, to avoid additional evening working, and that the Clerk work with members to develop terms of reference as soon as possible, ideally in January.

Council RESOLVED:

(1) to note the update
(2) that the Clerk work with members to develop draft terms of reference for a Well-being Committee and submit these to Council for further consideration, as soon as possible, ideally in January.

163. BUDGET 2019/20

Councillor Oakley presented the paper he had submitted. He explained (main points):

- the proposals in his paper were not all his ideas, but were those which various members had expressed previously
- there were approx. 7,000 properties in the ALCC area; over 70% of these were in Band A, paying less than £17 per house for ALCC, per year
- ALCC should raise and spend considerably more, to deliver better for the people of the ALCC area
- most other town or community councils (T&CCs) of a similar size spent much more than ALCC did
- £220,000 plus was not unreasonable for a council serving a population the size of ALCC's population
- the current precept (£112,000) was completely inadequate

- ALCC had kept its precept too low for too long
- charging £30 per house per year (at Band A) would be an increase of just over £13 per house per year, or just over £1 per month
- this would give ALCC a lot more money to put to good use for local communities
- council tax rises in England were capped; councils in Wales needed to make sure they were funded properly before capping came to Wales too
- some parish councils in England had increased their precept by 500%, with no negative feedback from the public they served.

Considerable discussion ensued. A brief summary of key points follows:

- the proposals from Councillor Oakley were "too much too soon"
- the budget and precept should be increased gradually, over a number of years
- a 20% increase in precept or a £33k budget increase would be reasonable
- £33k could pay for more events (£15k), young people's activities (£5k), a TV monitor in the Council Chamber, asset transfer of the Division Street top car park, an Admin Assistant (£7k) etc
- other existing budget commitments could be reduced or consolidated (e.g. grants and ward donations, events spending etc)
- if members had firm proposals, they could have written them down and circulated them earlier, so others could consider them properly in advance of the meeting
- Blaenavon had a higher precept than ALCC, with only a third of the households
- some T&CCs in Wales had a precept of over £1 million
- many town councils charged a lot more than ALCC, let alone community councils
- over half the budget was fixed staffing costs
- taking inflation into account, ALCC's budget had gone backwards, not forwards
- if ALCC did not increase its budget and precept, and do more for the people of the ALCC area, it was wasting its time
- people could vote at the ballot box on ALCC's record
- people didn't mind paying more if they could see the results
- solid, costed plans should be in place before the precept was increased
- people did not want to pay more council tax, when the street lights were going off in Blaenau Gwent
- people wanted value for money, and to see how much money was going where
- ALCC had to increase public awareness and public engagement
- the majority of members in the room today were in favour of a "considerable" (more than 30%) increase in the precept.

Councillor Oakley proposed that the officers ring round other town and community councils to find out some more reliable cost estimates and report back in January.

The Clerk explained that it was difficult to estimate costs, without the Council deciding what it wished to do in the year ahead. Costs could vary drastically. Clearly however, the Council was ambitious and needed to budget accordingly, as well as taking account of staff hours and costs. Taking over the top level of the Division Street car park, to ensure evening opening, was not simple, for example. A proper asset transfer was likely to cost in the region of £15k every year, not £5k. He reminded members that, in years gone by, ALCC had been criticised for considering its budget much too late and therefore not considering it properly. The meeting today was yet another opportunity for members to discuss the budget for the year ahead, prior to agreeing the budget in January.

The Chair stated that if other members had any other firm budget proposals, they should submit their proposals in advance of the papers going out for the 16 January meeting.

Council RESOLVED to consider the budget further on 16 January, and that officers find out more realistic cost estimates against the various budget options if possible.

164. VACANCY FOR A COUNCILLOR

The Clerk explained that ten signatures, calling for an election to the vacant seat, had not been received by the deadline. There had also been no applications to be co-opted into the vacant seat by the deadline advertised. The advert could stay on the website, but with the closing date removed.

Council RESOLVED to continue to advertise, but remove the closing date, and consider any future applications on a first come, first served basis.

165. SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 1(z)

Council **RESOLVED** to suspend standing order 1(z) to extend the meeting for longer, but only to deal with any urgent issues (as shown below), and to defer any other issues to a future meeting.

166. FINANCE ORDER

The Deputy Clerk explained:

- that the cheque for the next quarter payment for Christmas lights had not been sent yet, as installation of the Christmas lights had not yet been completed
- the Council's reserves now stood at only £16,500 approx
- £145.92 for the hire of refuse bins, for the WW1 Party in the Park, appeared twice in the "cheques presented" table
- this was a typing error; it only needed to be paid once.

Council RESOLVED:

(1) to note the above error in relation to the refuse bins payment
(2) to note the situation with reserves
(3) to approve the payments listed in the Finance Order, with the exception of the next 25% instalment of £4,989.60 for the Christmas lights
(4) to discuss payment of the next 25% instalment for the Christmas lights later in the meeting, after excluding the press and public.

167. SOLAR FARM GRANTS

The Clerk circulated copies of an application submitted (by email on 11 December) by Aberbeeg ward members, on behalf of the Ebbw Fach Community Group and Aberbeeg Community Centre Committee. A copy of this paper is attached to the minute book. All other proposals had been circulated with the agenda.

Councillor Phillips circulated and read out a letter (a copy of which is attached to the minute book), proposing that the 2018 solar farm grant be used for the Roseheyworth Community Woodland project, given its potential reach and links across the whole area.

The Chair reiterated that proposals must be submitted by members before (not at) meetings, to enable those proposals to be circulated in advance and allow everyone time to consider them properly.

It was pointed out that the Council had already decided to split the £35,000 available this year between the five wards (£7,000 each) and that people's expectations had been raised about many potential projects throughout the ALCC area.

Lengthy debate ensued, with arguments made for the merits of the Roseheyworth Woodlands scheme and its potential to attract more grants in future, as well as its potential to build links across the whole of the ALCC area (as part of the Ebbw Fach Trail) and to engage schools, children, local volunteers, partnerships, training and work opportunities etc. Comments were also made about the history of the Woodlands project, money spent previously, the work done on other projects, the decisions already made by the Council and the need for more time to consider the options.

The Clerk clarified the previous decisions made. He answered queries on the timeline and process.

A motion was moved by Councillor Morgan, seconded and:

Council RESOLVED (with 6 members voting in favour, 5 against and 2 abstaining) that the decision made on 21 November 2018 to split the £35,000 equally between the five wards of ALCC be rescinded.

A motion was moved by Councillor Bard, and seconded, that the Council look to take forward the proposal submitted by Councillor Phillips (to put the whole of the £35,000 into the Roseheyworth Community Woodlands scheme) but also look to include where possible links to the other projects submitted and any other potential partnership working opportunities.

Questions were asked about the timescale in which the money might be available from the solar farm company and about how the money would be spent. The Clerk reiterated again that the company wanted the Council to decide quickly on the priorities for the grant and that the Council had very limited resources with which to deliver projects. ALCC needed to give the money to community groups or trusts (for example) which were already established, for them to deliver desired outcomes and report back. ALCC did not have the resources for ongoing spending liabilities or workloads.

Following further debate, the Clerk suggested, in light of the lack of consensus, and:

Council RESOLVED:

(1) to defer further consideration to the 16 January meeting of the Council
(2) that the Clerk seek further clarity from the company on the deadline for decisions

and advise members as soon as possible
(3) that an urgent meeting be called if necessary, if an urgent decision is required to secure the funding, before the 16 January meeting.

Members agreed to deal with agenda item 20 next.

168. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Council RESOLVED to exclude the press and public from the meeting for the following items of business, by virtue of The Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, on the grounds that disclosure of the matters to be discussed would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of those matters.

Members agreed to deal with agenda item 22 next.

169. CHRISTMAS LIGHTS

Discussion ensued on the late arrival of Christmas lights this year, the poor quality of the lights provided in some areas and the lack of any lights in other areas. The Clerk advised members of conversations held with the contractor in the last few weeks and months and of the terms of the contract.

Council RESOLVED:

(1) not to pay the 25% "on installation" instalment at present, as much of the installation had not yet taken place
(2) that the Christmas Lights Working Group meet with the contractor to discuss the situation urgently
(3) that the Clerk seek further legal advice from One Voice Wales
(4) that members take photos of lights provided (or not provided) locally and
(5) that the situation be revisited in January.

Members agreed to deal with agenda item 17 next.

170. DEFIBRILLATORS

The Deputy Clerk reported that, as requested previously, he had obtained further quotes for different models. Defibs with GPS trackers cost in the region of £700 to £800 more each, with an annual maintenance cost of approx. £6,000. If the Council went for non-GPS models, it could purchase 10 units from the £15k set aside previously.

Council RESOLVED to proceed to purchase non-GPS tracked defibrillators.

Members agreed to deal with agenda item 21 next.

171. WAR MEMORIAL MAINTENANCE CONTRACT

The Clerk explained that the current contract to maintain the war memorial site had come to an end and a new contract was needed for the new year. The current contractor wished to carry on providing the service to the Council in the year ahead and had quoted a price to do so, which was within the budget agreed by Council. Another bid had been received, at more than double the cost of the current contractor. The current contractor was also cheaper than two other bidders when quotes were sought in 2017. The current contractor's performance had been good.

Council RESOLVED to award the contract for maintenance of the war memorial site in 2019 to Green Fingers Tree Services.

Members agreed to deal with agenda item 23 next.

172. PAYROLL SERVICES PROVISION

The Clerk reminded members that the Council had for some years employed an external accountant to calculate staff pay, national insurance, tax and pension contributions. The accountant provided the calculations and payslips but was not able to make the required payments, so cheques had to be written by staff. The Council had previously signalled a wish that all payroll related payments should be made by bank transfer and by an external agency, in line with advice from the Clerk and the Council's Internal Auditor. Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council had been approached and were able to offer such a service, but at a cost of £50 per month, as opposed to the current £26 per month. This offer was subject to further detailed discussions with Blaenau Gwent and the current service provider.

Council RESOLVED:

(1) to delegate authority to officers to continue discussions with BGCBC about them providing an automated payroll service with effect from 1 April 2019 if possible
(2) to enter into an agreement with BGCBC to do so if possible and
(3) to give notice to the current service provider of the Council's intentions as soon as possible, to ensure an effective transition to the new arrangements.

173. DEFERRAL OF FURTHER BUSINESS

The Council **RESOLVED** to defer any further business remaining on the agenda to the next available Council meeting.

The Chair wished everyone a Merry Christmas. The meeting ended at 9.55pm.

Signed as a correct record by the Chair ……………………………………………

NB these minutes are a summary of the proceedings and record of the decisions taken. They are not intended to be a verbatim record.

Minutes produced by Richard Gwinnell, Clerk

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Agenda Item 6

Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council

Budget and Precept 2019/20

Report of the Clerk and the Deputy Clerk

For Council on 16 January 2019

Background

The Council's principal source of income is the Annual Precept received from Blaenau Gwent. For the current financial year (2018/19) this was £112,916.23. As a general rule, the Council should only ask for precept that it intends to spend within the financial year that precept relates to.

To this end the Council should have an agreed projected budget showing all areas of spend that the precept will cover and that Council will monitor against during the financial year by quarterly budget meetings and monthly finance orders which are submitted to full Council.

Current Position

The current 2018/19 budget is shown at **Annex 1.**

The precept request must be with Blaenau Gwent by the end of January 2019. This meeting on 16 January has been scheduled specifically to agree the final budget and precept for 2019/20.

The Council discussed the budget specifically at its meetings on 7 November and 12 December 2018, so members have already had several opportunities to consider the budget for the year ahead, before the deadline to agree the budget and the precept.

The draft budget set out below is based on the previous year's figures, with uplifts for salary and estimates of future costs.

Budget 2019/20

Attached is a spreadsheet **(Annex 2)** with the details of the proposed spending for the Council in 2019/20. It is split into 5 sections.

1 - Salaries: The biggest single expenditure area is staff salaries and associated costs (NI and Pensions). This is currently nearly 50% of the budget. The budget assumes that the Council will continue to employ in 2019/20 a part-time (30 hours) Town Clerk, and a part time (23 hours) Deputy Town Clerk. It includes staff salaries applicable from 1 April 2019 (salaries increase by one increment each from 1 April based on performance being satisfactory, following appraisal). There is no contingency for any overtime payments specified in the budget. The budget includes the Council's pension contributions for both members of staff, even though the current Deputy Clerk does not take up his option to enrol in the Local Government Pension Scheme. The cost of staff salaries is **£47,336.26** which is based on the spine points of the NALC local government pay scales. With pension and NI contributions the total costs are **£60,064.81**

2 - Training and subscriptions: It is vital that the relevant training, development and support are available for officers of the Council. A sum of £1,200 (£600 per staff member) to facilitate training and the cost of 2 SLCC (Society of Local Council Clerks) memberships is included. There is also a provision of £2000, the same as last year, for members training; this gives training of £105 per member during 2019/20. It should be noted, this is not a training allowance for each member, just an illustration, and training should only be paid for where it is relevant. Total: **£3,550.**

3 - Administration: There are several items under this heading and these are mainly estimates based on previous year's expenditure and an increase for inflation. An additional £4,000 (compared to last year) has also been added for external audit fees. This does not reflect agreed costs but is an estimate, bearing in mind that ALCC has been charged nothing since WAO investigated the 2014/15 accounts. The estimated cost for internal auditor services has been raised from £1,000 to £1,500 based on costs paid in 2018/19. There is a nominal sum of £500 for mileage costs for members and officers. In total the cost is **£14,700.**

4 - Council Grants and Ward Donations: There are four elements to this. Individual members have the discretion to award up to £200 each within 2019/20, to donate to organisations within the wards they represent. A Chairman's Allowance of £800 is also budgeted for, to pay for costs involved in their function as Chairman. Also included is a sum of £5,600 for Council grants to allow for donations to organisations within our area. Any spending within this £5,600 must be agreed at full Council meetings. There is also a budgeted amount of £2,850 for Members Allowances, assuming these are claimed. In total the cost is **£13,050.**

5 - Environment and Leisure There are a number of items here that should be self explanatory. The £2000 donation to the running of the toilets is the same as budgeted for in the 2018/19 budget where it was assumed that the Council would help in the financial costs of running the toilets. The sum for Christmas lights remains at £20,000. An additional £15,000 has been included, reflecting the Council decision on 7 November 2018, to replenish reserves, following the Council's spending of this money in 2018/19 on defibrillators. The amounts total **£43,935.00.**

Overall, this would mean a total Council budget of **£135,299.81.**

This is just over £22,000 more than the 2018/19 budget but considers actual spending commitments and decisions already made by the Council. Of that £22k, £15k is replenishment of reserves (to pay for public access defibrillators) and £4k is potential additional external auditor costs. Some budget amounts are not expected to be spent (e.g. some members allowances and some pension contributions, based on existing practices), but need to be budgeted for, so that they are properly accounted for. This is in line with guidance and advice from the Auditor General for Wales, who has indicated that town and community councils across Wales collectively need to improve their budget setting arrangements and that budgets should better reflect need.

Council may remove or reduce some discretionary budget lines if it wishes, where there is no obligation to pay those amounts, where there is no contract in place and where costs are within the discretion of Council.

Areas to Consider

The Council has in the past budgeted and managed its finances in a much less robust way than it does now. As members know, the budget and precept were kept to a minimum for many years. In 2016/17, there was a significant underspend. The Council significantly overspent in 2017/18, as the Council took on more staff, dealt with a number of past issues (e.g. a bill of £26k from the Wales Audit Office for past work) and started to undertake projects (e.g. the War Memorial ramp). In 2018/19, the Council has been more realistic and improved its financial management, so that what it needs to spend has become clearer.

This report gives Council in **Annex 2** a consequent "standstill" budget position of £135,299.81, which reflects the costs it currently faces and replaces reserves spent on 9 external defibrillators in 2018/19.

This "standstill" budget does not include any new areas of spending, as these are for the Council to decide upon. As members will know, a survey was undertaken in 2018, which showed clearly that members of the public want ALCC to do more, and that they are willing to pay more for that to happen.

Annex 3 to this report is a draft budget proposal received from Councillor Oakley.

Annex 4 to this report is a draft budget proposal received from Councillor Bard.

As made clear previously, any other budget proposals from members must be submitted and circulated before the meeting, so that all members have time to adequately consider them. To this end, any other budget proposal must be received by 9am on Monday 14 January, or it may not be considered on 16 January. If any budget amendment is moved at the meeting (e.g. to add a specific amount for a specific outcome or to remove a specific amount proposed), this must be written down and handed to the Chair, so that it is clear, before members vote upon it.

Reserves and Contingency

The Council has a Reserve Fund of just over £16k. This can be used to cover any unexpected spending. This is much less than the reserves available last year, and the year before, so it is clear the Council needs to increase its budget, to avoid the current trajectory (whereby reserves may soon be extinguished). As decided by Council on 7 November, the reserves used to fund the purchase of defibrillators in 2018/19 will be replenished from the 2019/20 budget.

It is good practice to have sufficient reserves, to deal with contingencies, including unforeseen election fees (in the region of £3,000 to 4,000 per seat), unforeseen additional external audit fees, "well-being initiatives" and anything else the Council decides upon or needs to spend in the year ahead. If any reserves are earmarked (i.e. set aside for specific purposes), an appropriate amount (at least 10% of the Council's yearly budget) should remain un-earmarked for contingency purposes (i.e. any totally unforeseen costs).

The annual VAT reclaim is around £4k - £6k, which gives the Council some extra contingency in the Current Account.

Precept

The Council does not have any tax raising powers itself, or other income (other than the annual precept) to rely upon. Its budget is therefore the same as its precept. In other words, whatever Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council needs, it needs to demand that precept from Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (BGCBC).

Recommendations:

(1) That Council notes the reserves position and its decision of 7 November 2018
(2) That Council agrees the budget and precept it requires for 2019/20
(3) That Council notifies its precept to BGCBC by 31 January 2019.

Authors:

Steve Edwards, Deputy Clerk

Richard Gwinnell, Town Clerk and RFO

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Annex 1

Budget 2018/19 - Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council

Salaries: this assumes 1 part time (30 hours) Town Clerk and 1 part time (23 hours) Deputy Town Clerk							
Post	FTE	Hourly rate	Weekly	Annual	Employer NI Cont	Pension	Total Council Cost
1 Town Clerk NJC Spine point 40	£35,444.00	£18.41	£552.30	£28,719.60	£2,836.59	£5,169.53	£36,725.72
1 DeputyTown Clerk NJC Spine point 28	£23,398.00	£12.97	£298.31	£15,512.12	£1,014.02	£2,792.18	£19,318.32
Totals				£44,231.72	£3,850.61	£7,961.71	**£56,044.04**

Training and subscribtions		
2 Memberships of SLCC		£306.94
Trainng Budget for Officers Including Conference Attendence		£1,200.00
Training Budget for members		£2,000.00
Totals		**£3,506.94**

Administration		
IT for MS365 for two members of staff		£232.37
Bank Charges		£200.00
Insurance		£669.50
One Voice Wales Membership		£2,210.38
Printing and photcopying usage		£700.00
Printer Rental		£1,300.00
Internet and Phone (BT)		£772.50
Web Hosting - Vision ICT		£250.00
Stationary and Postage		£1,236.00
Accountants		£300.00
Information Commissioner		£40.00
Electricity from Britsh Gas		£669.50
Internal Audit		£1,000.00
Travel and Mileage		£500.00
Extrernal Audit		£1,000.00
Totals		**£11,080.25**

Council and Ward Donations		
£200 per Councellor		£3,800.00
Chairmans Allowance		£800.00
Council Fundings		£5,600.00
Members Allowance (19*£150)		£2,800.00
		£13,000.00
Environment and Lesiure all		
Xmas lights		£20,000.00
Installation of Power supply at Aberbeeg and Cwmtillery Lakes for Christmas Lights 2018		£1,200.00
WinterFest		£2,000.00
Panto		£1,300.00
Contribution to Toilets		£2,000.00
Allotments		£510.00
War Memorial Maintenance		£1,300.00
Wreaths		£125.00
SWALEC Costs for Christmas lights		£850.00
Totals		**£29,285.00**

Overall Total **£112,916.23**

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Annex 2

Budget 2019/20 - Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council

Salaries: this assumes 1 part time (30 hours) Town Clerk and 1 part time (23 hours) Deputy Town Clerk							
Post	FTE (Full Time Equivalent)	Hourly rate	Weekly	Annual Actual	Employer NI Cont	Pension	Total Council Cost
1 Town Clerk NJC Spine Point 35 (Spine Points have been consolidated)	£37,849.00	£19.62	£588.54	£30,604.22	3,060.84	£5,508.76	£39,173.82
1 DeputyTown Clerk NJC Spine Point 23 (Spine Points have been conslidated)	£26,999.00	£13.99	£321.77	£16,732.04	1,147.19	£3,011.77	£20,891.00
Totals				£47,336.26	£4,208.03	£8,520.53	**£60,064.81**

Training and subscribtions		
2 Memberships of SLCC		£350.00
Trainng Budget for Officers Including Conference Attendence		£1,200.00
Training Budget for members		£2,000.00
Totals		**£3,550.00**

Administration		
IT for MS365 for two members of staff		£200.00
Bank Charges		£210.00
Insurance		£650.00
One Voice Wales Membership		£2,350.00
Printing and photcopying usage		£700.00
Printer Rental		£1,300.00
Internet and Phone (BT)		£250.00
Web Hosting - Vision ICT		£250.00
Stationary and Postage		£1,000.00
Accountants (payroll)		£600.00
Information Commissioner		£40.00
Electricity from Britsh Gas		£0.00
Internal Audit		£1,500.00
Travel and Mileage		£500.00
External Audit		£5,000.00
Welsh Water		£150.00
Totals		**£14,700.00**

Council and Ward Donations		
£200 per Councillor - Ward Donations		£3,800.00
Chairmans Allowance		£800.00
Council Grants		£5,600.00
Members Allowance (19*£150)		£2,850.00
		£13,050.00
Environment and Lesiure all items		
Xmas lights		£20,000.00
WinterFest		£2,000.00
Panto		£1,300.00
Contribution to Toilets		£2,000.00
Allotments		£510.00
War Memorial Maintenance		£1,500.00
Wreaths		£125.00
SWALEC Costs for Christmas lights		£1,500.00
Replenish Reserves - Defibralator Project Costs		£15,000.00
Totals		**£43,935.00**

Overall Total **£135,299.81**

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Annex 3

Abertillery & Llanhilleth Community Council

2019 – 2020 BUDGET PROPOSAL

PRESENTED

TO

FULL COUNCIL

16th January 2019

Abertillery & Llanhilleth Community Council
Council Offices, Mitre Street, Abertillery. NP13 1AE.
(Telephone 01495 217323)

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6	Excerpts from Department for Communities and Local Government, "The Good Councilors Guide to Financial and Transparency 2017"
11	Breakdown of Existing Year's Budget & Breakdown of Proposed 2019 – 2020 Year's Budget
12	Proposed Projects and Costs
13	Proposed Asset Transfers 2020 – 2021
14	Breakdown of Proposed 2019 – 2020 Years Budget including some proposed projects from pages 12 - 13
15	Budget for Proposed Year 2019 – 2020 in Pie Charts & spreadsheet formats
23	Breakdown of Council Areas, Breakdown of Council Staff Costs Year 2017 – 2018 & Breakdown of Council Tax Bands
24	Implementation of Proposed Budget
26	Blaenau Gwent Council Tax & Precept Information

Introduction

This report is based on information from, but not limited to:

- Department for Communities and Local Government, "The Good Councilors Guide to Financial and Transparency 2017: https://www.nalc.gov.uk/library/publications/2468-the-good councillors-guide-on-finance-and-transparency-2017/file

- Ministry of Housing and Local Government, National Statistics April 2018. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/700668/Council_tax_levels_set_by_local_authorities_in_England_2018-19_revised.pdf

- The Good Councilors Guide for Community and Town Councils. http://www.onevoicewales.org.uk/OVWWeb/UserFiles/Files/Good%20Practice%20General/Good%20Councillors%20Guide%202017.PDF

- Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council. https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/

- Public Survey 2018 by Abertillery & Llanhilleth Community Council

Abertillery & Llanhilleth Community Council has a present budget of £113,000.00. This enables the Council to meet its statutory requirement and has a surplus of approximately £42,000.00, which is used for Members costs, training, Christmas lights and various other limited donations throughout the year.

This report is set out to project what the Council can achieve in the coming financial year. A detailed survey carried out by Members and Officers of the Council over the last few months clearly demonstrates that the area is in need of essential services, events and additional Wellbeing enhancements, listed but not limited to:

- *Better facilities for young people*
- *Better local community events*
- *Better parks and leisure facilities*
- *Cleaner streets*

- *Towns "in bloom"*

Details and data for the survey are available on request from Abertillery & Llanhilleth Community Council

A little on the Precept, Parish, Town and Community councils may raise a 'precept' on the council tax bills produced by their local billing authority (Unitary authority, District and Borough Council). This is essentially a demand for a sum to be collected through the council tax system. Council taxpayers cannot refuse to pay it, and the billing authority cannot refuse to levy it. It is the only source of tax revenue available to parish, Town and Community councils. **Please see page 8 for a concise explanation from the Good Councillor Guide to Finance and Transparency.**

Historically, parish, Town and Community councils were able to raise a 'rate' from the time of their establishment in 1894: this was linked to their then duties under the Poor Laws. Rates were levied on non-domestic and domestic property until 1990, when the Community Charge and the National Non-Domestic Rate replaced the rates. Since then, Parishes, Town and Community Councils have precepted on domestic property only, via the Community Charge and then the Council Tax.

A little on reserves, you will see from the information below, Councils do not have to hold a particular amount of reserves, however the recommended reserves to hold, from several guides and government papers, is between 3 and 12 months precept. It is mandatory for the council to have in place Financial Regulations and a Financial Risk Assessment that detail how reserves are dealt with.

So, what to do, I detail below the possible options that the Council has:

Options:

1 Do nothing, leave the Precept as is and carry on with existing budget, making cuts as required keeping pace with inflation.

2 Increase the budget/Precept in line with inflation (using the second draft budget that was submitted in last meeting).

3 Complete overhaul of the budget/Precept as presented in this report

What are the risks of not reviewing and increasing the budget/Precept:

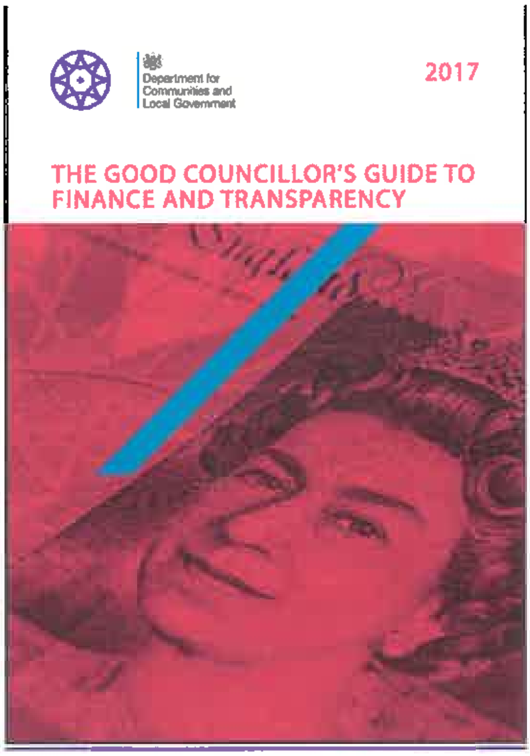
1 As publicly announced by several government departments and has been consulted on, the Precepts of Parish, Town and Community Councils may well be capped. Especially as local authority's are off loading services to Parish, Town and Community Councils, effectively expecting them to pick up these responsibilities, thus raising Precepts to do so. This results in a stealth tax rise.

2 Not being able to fund Wellbeing and general enhancements to the community.

3 Not carrying out the suggested enhancements and added services in the survey we conducted. People will say you asked our opinion on what to do and we did agree for the Precept to increase; now you are not doing it.

This report goes on to detail the existing data that our budget is based on and the information required to make a **careful, fully informed decision** on the 2019 – 2020 budget, Precept.

Excerpts taken from Department for Communities and Local Government, "The Good Councilors Guide to Finance and Transparency 2017"



BUDGETING

The preparation of an annual budget is one of the key statutory tasks undertaken by the council, irrespective of its size.

The budget:

- *Results in the council setting the precept for the year;*

- *Gives the clerk and other officers overall authority to make spending commitments in line with decisions of the council;*

- *Enables progress monitoring during the year by comparing actual spending against planned spending It is important that councillors understand how the budget is put together and how it should be used. The budget is an essential tool for controlling the council's finances, and demonstrates that the council will have sufficient income to meet its objectives and carry out its* *activities.*

The key stages in the budgeting process are:

- *Review of current year budget and spending;*
- *Determine the cost of spending plans;*
- *Assess levels of anticipated income;*
- *Provide for contingencies and the need for reserves;*
- *Approve the budget;*
- *Set the precept*

RESERVES

Local councils need to hold an amount in reserves to meet unexpected expenditure; otherwise they could run out of money before the end of the financial year.

A council should typically hold between 3 and 12 months expenditure as a general reserve. If the general reserve is too low then it may not be enough to cover unexpected expenditure or emergencies, whilst if the general reserve is too high then local electors have paid a tax, which is not being used for the benefit of the local community.

Local councils have no legal powers to hold revenue reserves other than for reasonable working capital or for specifically earmarked purposes, therefore the year-end general reserve should not be significantly higher than the annual precept.

The council may have 'earmarked reserves' for specific projects, where money is allocated for a specific purpose but may not be spent in that financial year. This may include reserves to purchase or renovate a building, develop a sports facility or community centre.

Many councils also hold an 'election reserve', as all reasonable costs of holding local council elections can be fully recharged by the district or unitary council to the local council. In the case of contested elections for a council with several wards then these costs can be relatively high.

If the amount of reserves at the year-end are above a certain level in relation to the annual precept then the council must advise the external auditor of why this level of reserves is required.

COUNCIL TAX PRECEPTS

The precept is the local council tax required from local electors to meet the council's budget. Every local council has the power to levy precept each financial year as a "local precepting authority". The local council precept is a component of the total council tax levied on local government electors in the local council area.

Local councils do not receive any direct funding from central government therefore are reliant on the local precept and any other income they generate from the services or facilities that they provide.

The council tax requirement is the difference between the council's estimated income and estimated expenditure for the year. The council must approve a budget before it sets a precept. The budget and precept both need to be approved at a full council meeting and minuted; the council must then manage its activities within budget.

The precept has to be set by the council before 1st March of the preceding financial year, although many billing authorities will request the information earlier.

The precept amount required is advised to the local billing authority (district, borough or unitary council), who will add this amount to the council tax bills in the local council area, and then pay that amount over to the local council.

The amount is either paid by the principal authority at the beginning of the financial year in April, or paid in 2 installments usually in April and September. Once the precept has been notified there is no provision for it to be increased for that year.

There is also a calculation for what is referred to as the "Band D Equivalent". This is the middle band of council tax and is supposed to illustrate the amount of council tax paid on an average property in the area. It provides a measure, which enables precepts across councils of different size to be compared. However, different areas have different mixes of housing, which can mean that it does not reflect the actual average amount paid.

REFERENDA PRINCIPLES

The Localism Act introduced statutory controls to restrict "excessive" increases in council tax by precepting authorities. Principal authorities are subject to referenda principles (often referred to as 'capping') for increases above a certain percentage determined as "excessive" by the government each year, which can often be as low as a 2% increase.

This limits the council to a maximum % council tax increase for the year unless a referendum is held and local electors approve the proposed increase. So far, local councils have had an unlimited power to precept.

This is for a number of reasons including closeness to their local electorate, the relatively low total precept amounts as a proportion of overall council tax bills, the large % change that can result from a relatively small monetary increase, the high cost of a referendum, and the fact that many local councils have increased the precept to take over community assets and services previously owned or run by principal authorities.

However, the government has consulted on proposals to extend referenda principles to local councils, particularly those "larger spending" councils with the highest total precepts and band D equivalents. Whilst referenda principles have not been imposed on any local council at the time of writing, the government has stated that they expect local councils to "clearly demonstrate restraint" when increasing precepts that are not a direct result of taking on additional responsibilities, and that the level of precepts set by local councils will be kept under close review.

Therefore the possibility remains that this form of control could be introduced at some future date especially for larger spending councils. It is important that local councils are able to demonstrate that they are engaged and extensively consult with local residents when proposing precept increases, that they are able to separately identify any increases associated with taking on additional assets and services from principal authorities, and that they are open and transparent and fully comply with the transparency code publication requirements (covered in section B of this guide).

The extension of these principles to the local council sector could place a major restriction on the freedom and flexibility of a local council to operate in accordance with the wishes of the local community unless it was prepared to hold a referendum. Therefore it is imperative that councillors are able to explain and justify larger precept increases and demonstrate that they have the support of the local community.

Local councils should also be able to respond to any further government consultation on such measures with substantive evidence and facts relating to any past increases and specific issues it may cause for future plans and objectives

Breakdown of existing years Budget 2018 - 2019

Budget		£113,000	
Staff Costs		£56,000	= 49.55 % of the budget
Overhead Costs		£14,500	
	SUB TOTAL	£70,500	= 62% of the budget
Members Cost, Donations Etc		£9,000	
All other expenditure, Christmas Lights etc		£33,500	= 29% of the budget
	TOTAL BUDGET	£113,000	

Breakdown of Proposed Baseline Draft Budget 2019 – 2020:

Budget		£120,000	
Staff Costs		£60,000	= 50 % of the budget
Overhead Costs		£18,000	
	SUB TOTAL	£78,000	= 65% of the budget
Members and Ward Donations		£13,000	
All other expenditure, Christmas Lights WinterFest etc		£29,000	= 28.33% of the budget
	TOTAL BUDGET	£120,000	

With a population of approximately 14,000 people (estimated) and 7,791 houses, we will spend back into the community £29,000, this is £3.72 per house per year. This amounts to £2.07 per person per year. There are no funds for any new projects for the community.

POSSIBLE PROJECTED PROJECTS

1	Youth Services including transport costs for activities and staff co-ordination Costs	£30,000
2	Entertainment (3 events a year) including transport etc	£24,000
3	Chamber Screen/Monitor	£1,000
4	Defibrillator on going project	£5,000
5	Abertillery town in bloom & War Memorial upkeep	£6,000
6	Car park opening (Security Company contracted from 7pm to 11pm including 1 – 2 patrols in this time)	£12,000
7	Shop Local Group, Advertising and entertainment of 1 event per month	£30,000
8	Cwmtillery, Six Bells, Aberbeeg, Llanhilleth Wards Village style fate event (£2.5k per ward)	£10,000
9	Community Grants for all wards with an agreed cap	£10,000
10	Public toilets refurbishment (option 1)	£10,000
11	Public toilets, Up to 5 Business's to get funding @ £200 per business Per year (option 2)	£1,000
12	Wellbeing, to enable the Committee when formed to progress ideas, some of the above is included in Wellbeing	£5,000

13	Refreshment costs for local groups being invited to meetings to get them involved and committed	£500
14	Advertising and promoting the local area, signage etc	£2,500
15	Replenishment of reserves used for defibrillators	£15,000

ESTIMATED POSSIBLE COSTS FOR THE ABOVE **£161,000**
(Does not include Item 11 option 2)

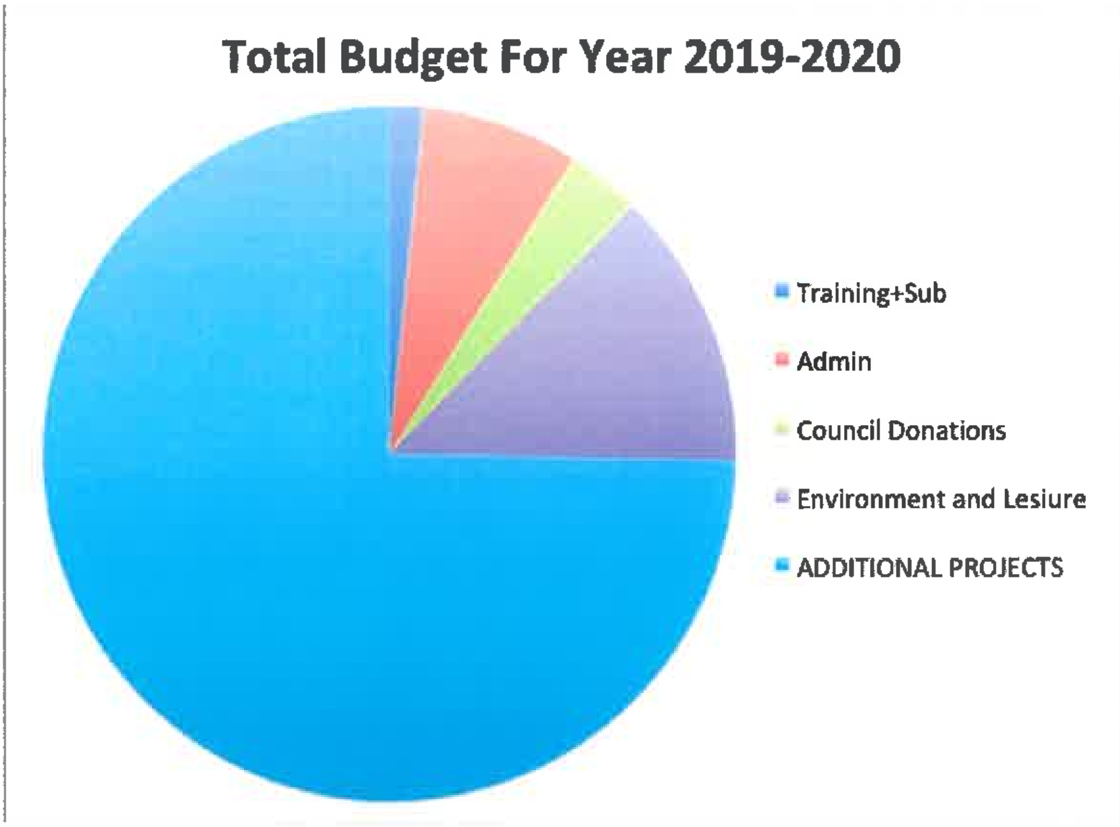
Possible Asset Transfers for 2020 – 2021 years budget:

Multi story car park Asset Transfer	£TBA
Playgrounds	£ TBA
Toilets	£ TBA
Community Chapel Building Church Street	£ TBA

Breakdown of Proposed 2019 -2020 years Budget including some Projects:

Budget (based on approximately £30.00 per house per year band A		**£234,000**	
Staff Costs		£80,000	= 34.2 % of the budget
Overhead Costs, Including Training and Subscriptions		£20,000	
	SUB TOTAL	£100,000	= 42.7% of the budget
Members Cost, Ward Donations Etc		£17,500	
Other expenditure, Christmas Lights etc, excluding War Memorial.		£28,000	= 12% of the budget
Replenishment of Reserves for **Defibrillator** Project		**£15,000**	
Additional projects for the community		£73,500	= 31.41% of the budget
	TOTAL BUDGET	**£234,000**	

The following spreadsheet and pie chart budget is a projection of all potential costs, obviously to carry out all this would be too ambitious, so Council will have to prioritise what projects are realistic and what they wish to achieve in the coming year. The spreadsheet and pie charts below are a guide only



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Council Offices, Mitre Street, Abertillery. NP13 1AE.
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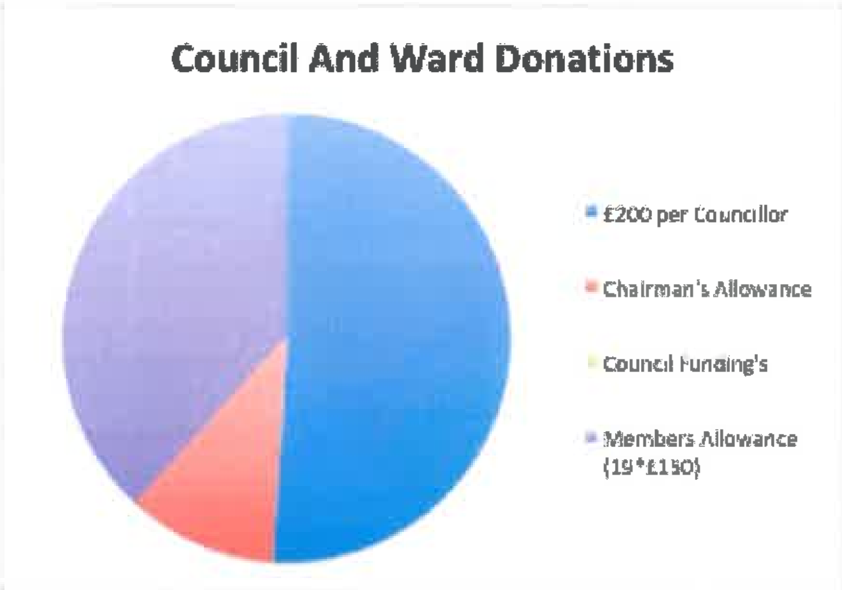
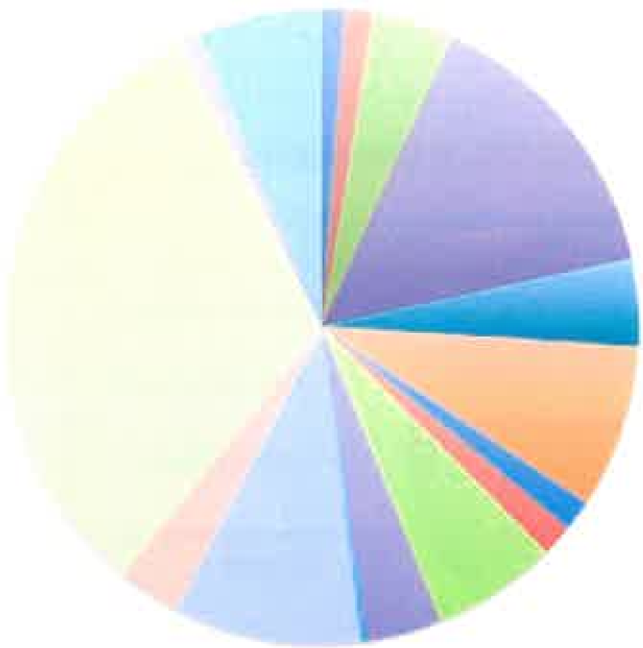
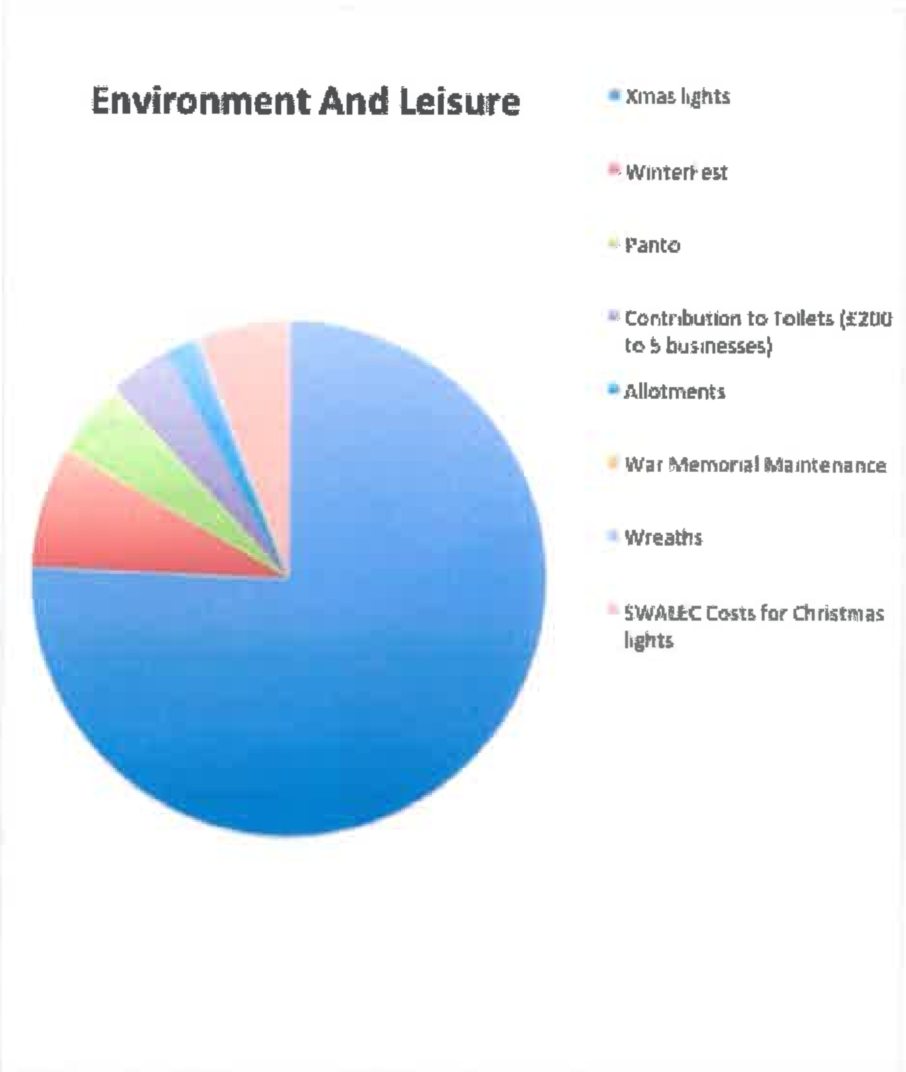
Training And Subscriptions
2 Memberships of SLCC
Training Budget for Officers Including Conference Attendance
Training Budget for members


Council And Ward Donations
£200 per Councillor
Chairman's Allowance
Council Funding's
Members Allowance (19*£150)

Administration





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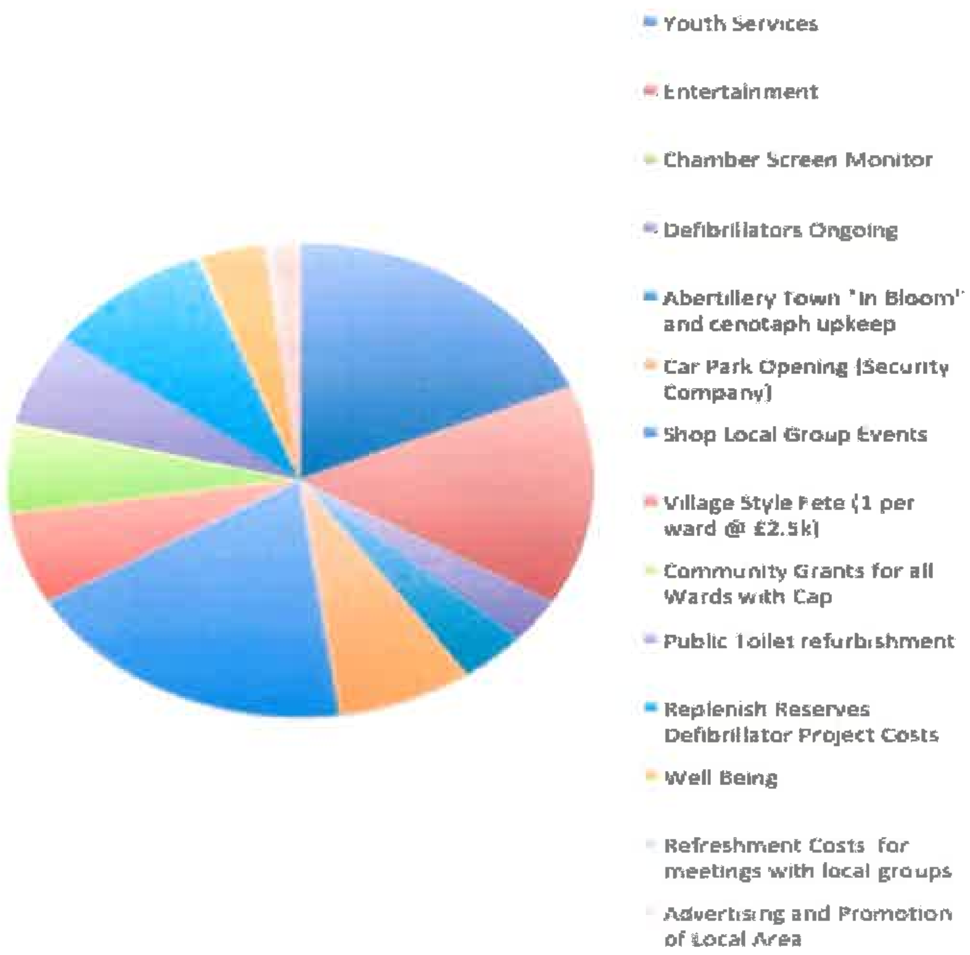
Additional Products



Budget 2019/20 - Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council

Salaries: this assumes 1 part time (30 hours) Town Clerk and 1 part time (23 hours) Deputy Town Clerk		
Post		Total Council Cost
1 Town Clerk NJC Spine point 35 (Spine Points have been consolidated)		£39,173.82
1 Deputy Town Clerk NJC Spine point 23 (Spine Points have been consolidated)		£20,897.01
Additional Staff Costs (Direct and Indirect)		£20,000
Totals		**£80,070.83**

Training and subscriptions		
2 Memberships of SLCC		£313.08
Training Budget for Officers Including Conference Attendance		£1,200.00
Training Budget for members		£2,000.00
Totals		**£3,513.08**

Administration		
IT for MS365 for two members of staff		£200.00
Bank Charges		£210.00
Insurance		£650.00
One Voice Wales Membership		£2,320.90
Printing and photocopying usage		£700.00
Printer Rental		£1,300.00
Internet and Phone (BT)		£250.00
Web Hosting - Vision ICT		£250.00
Stationary and Postage		£1,000.00
Accountants (payroll)		£600.00
Information Commissioner		£40.00
Electricity from British Gas		£0.00
Internal Audit		£1,500.00
Travel and Mileage		£500.00
External Audit		£5,000.00
Welsh Water		£150.00
65" Monitor for Chamber		£1,000.00
Totals		**£15,670.90**

Council and Ward Donations		
£200 per Councillor		£3,800.00
Chairman's Allowance		£800.00
Council Funding's		£0.00
Members Allowance (19*£150)		£2,850.00
		£7,450.00
Environment and Leisure all items below		
Xmas lights		£20,000.00
WinterFest		£2,000.00
Panto		£1,300.00
Contribution to Toilets (£200 to 5 businesses)		£1,000.00
Allotments		£510.00
War Memorial Maintenance		£0.00
Wreaths		£125.00
SWALEC Costs for Christmas lights		£1,500.00
Total		**£27,935.00**
PROPOSED ADDITIONAL PROJECTS		
Youth Services		£30,000.00
Entertainment		£24,000.00
Chamber Screen Monitor		£0.00
Defibrillators Ongoing		£5,000.00
Abertillery Town "In Bloom" and War Memorial upkeep		£6,000.00
Car Park Opening (Security Company)		£12,000.00
Shop Local Group Events		£30,000.00
Village Style Fete (1 per ward @ £2.5k)		£10,000.00
Community Grants for all Wards with Cap		£10,000.00
Public Toilet refurbishment		£10,000.00
Replenish Reserves Defibrillator Project Costs		£15,000.00
Well Being		£5,000.00
Refreshment Costs for meetings with local groups		£500.00
Advertising and Promotion of Local Area		£2,500.00
Total		**£161,000.00**

Overall Total **£295,639.81**

Abertillery & Llanhilleth Community Council
Council Offices, Mitre Street, Abertillery. NP13 1AE.
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Breakdown of Council Areas Year 2018 - 2019

COUNCIL	COUNCILLORS	PROPERTIES	PRECEPT	BAND D	AVG PER HOUSE
Abertillery	19	7791	£113,000	£24.98	£16.33
Brynmawr	16	2609	£43,000	£26.22	£16.48
Natyglo Blaina	16	4244	£78,250	£29.60	£18.43
Tredegar	16	7220	£138,401	£30.20	£19.16

Breakdown of Council Staff Costs Year 2017 - 2018

COUNCIL	COUNCILLORS	PRECEPT	STAFF COSTS	% OF PRECEPT
Abertillery	19	£99,155	£51,800	52.24
Brynmawr	16	£43,000	£26,322	61.93
Natyglo Blaina	16	£78,250	£41,612	53.17
Tredegar	16	£138,401	£49,989	36.19
CURRENT YEAR 2018 - 2019				
Abertillery	19	£113,000	£56,000	49.55

Breakdown of Housing Tax Bands

Tax Band	A/A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
No of Houses	5,432	1,579	250	175	78	24	5	1	1
% of properties for the area	72.0%	20.9%	3.3%	2.3%	1.0%	0.3%	0.1%	0%	0%

Abertillery & Llanhilleth Community Council
Council Offices, Mitre Street, Abertillery. NP13 1AE.
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PROPOSED IMPLEMENTATION OF BUDEGT

When Council agrees the budget, it will be crucial to start implementation works in the current financial year. Please remember, "Benjamin Franklin supposedly once said, "If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail." Sir Winston Churchill is credited with another, oft repeated, saying: "Those who fail to learn from the past are doomed to repeat it." Therefore we must start in earnest. My proposals would be, but not limited to:

- Investigate full costing's during February 2019
- Set up a Project Plan (using Steve's experience in this area) during February
- Finalise costing's ready to submit to full Council for the March meeting
- Create a projects Working Group or Committee, March meeting
- Working Group to implement agreed projects, final sign off April Council meeting
- Working Group, Committee, to meet monthly, April, May and June
- Ongoing quarterly meetings of the Working Group, Committee
- December full review of the current year projects and report to Full Council
- January Budget meeting of full Council, review progress and budget for year 2020 - 2021

Excerpts taken from Blaenau Gwent Website

Your Council Tax Bill 2018/2019

For the next financial year commencing on the 1st April 2018, Blaenau Gwent CBC has set a Council Tax increase of 4.2**%.** This is lower than the average increase in Council Tax across Wales and the lowest in the Greater Gwent area. The background to the Council's financial position needs to be considered in the context of: -

- Reductions in funding from the Welsh Government, forecast into the medium term
- A significant increase in the number of Looked After Children
- Welsh Government continuing to fund the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (but the overall sum across Wales has not changed for five years and there is still a substantial financial risk for the Council to bear).

In agreeing this increase, the Council has a duty to strike a responsible balance in terms of protecting services and jobs but also wanted to demonstrate that consideration has been given to safeguarding the wider interests of local residents, many of whom may be experiencing financial difficulties during the current economic recession. The Council believes it has done this by approving an increase of only 81p and 95p per week on Band A and Band B properties respectively, which account for approximately 85% of all properties in the County Borough.

For the medium term, the Council has adopted a strategic financial plan which will enable it to plan its spending in line with its funding. Within this framework the Council will be looking at further ways to achieve budget reductions whilst mitigating the impact on services.

In the medium term, the Council will not be able to directly provide all the services it currently provides. For example, others could provide some services, although stopping some services cannot be ruled out. Current projections indicate that this will become increasingly challenging at least until the end of the current decade.

However, in acknowledgement of the importance of the Council as the largest local employer, there has been and will continue to be, a commitment to avoid compulsory redundancies wherever possible and consultation with staff and trade unions will be Ongoing throughout this period. The Joint Trade Unions have previously commended the Council for this engagement and the responsible manner in which the Budget has been set historically.

Budget proposals for 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 have been developed using a "One Council " approach and political groups have been appraised at various stages of the budget setting process. There has been a re-vitalised consultation with the public through the "Blaenau Gwent Budget Challenge" community engagement programme.

It will still be business as usual for many of the services the Authority currently provides. However, as the grant received from the Welsh Government does not cover all of the Councils costs, some costs must fall directly upon the local Council Tax payer and this is why an increase in the local level of Council Tax is necessary.

The Council will continue to monitor budgets closely throughout 2018/2019 and will undertake a series of reviews and consultations to inform future years budget proposals.

The Council has agreed a budget that provides a degree of protection to schools and Social Services demonstrates investment in some environmental services and does not require funding from reserves.

Supporting Information

The County Borough has approved a net budget of £142,046,000 for 2018/2019. The wide range of services supported by this expenditure are shown in the graph:

Comparison of 2017/2018 and 2018/2019 Estimated Net Expenditure

Capital Expenditure

In 2018/2019 the Council estimates that total Capital Expenditure will be £12,580,000 this will comprise:

	2017/2018	2018/2019
Other Services	£17,750,000	£12,580,000
Total	£17,750,000	£12,580,000

Estimated Financial Reserves

Revenue Reserves – dedicated general reserves are estimated to stand at £5,800,000 million at the year-end.

Standard Spending Assessment

The Councils Standard Assessment for 2018/2019 has been determined by the National Assembly for Wales as £134,628,000 (2017/2018 £133,102,000).

The Authority's budget requirement for the year is £134,628,000 2018/2019.

Council Tax for each area 2018/2019

Band /Community	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
Abertillery	1,222.97	1,426.80	1,630.62	1,834.46	2,242.12	2,649.77	3,057.43	3,668.92	4,208.41
Brynmawr	1,223.80	1,427.76	1,631.73	1,835.70	2,243.64	2,651.56	3,059.50	3,671.40	4,283.30
Nantyglo & Blaina	1,226.05	1,430.39	1,634.73	1,839.08	2,247.77	2,656.45	3,065.13	3,678.16	4,291.19
Tredegar	1,226.45	1,430.86	1,635.26	1,839.68	2,248.50	2,657.31	3,066.13	3,679.36	4,292.59
Ebbw Vale/ Cwm/ Beaufort	1,206.32	1,407.37	1,608.42	1,809.48	2,211.59	2,613.69	3,015.80	3,618.96	4,222.12

Precepts and Levies

The following bodies have precepted upon Blaenau Gwent CBC:

2017/2018 £	**Band D Equivalent £**		**2018/2019 £**	**Band D Equivalent £**
4,607,439	228.84	The Police and Crime Commissioner	4,819,779	238.84
99,155	21.85	Abertillery and Llanhilleth Town Council	112,916	24.98
43,000	26.23	Brynmawr Town Council	43,000	26.22
78,250	29.65	Nantyglo and Blaina Town Council	78,250	29.60
138,401	30.45	Tredegar Town Council	138,401	30.20

The following bodies have levied the sums indicated on the Council

Organisation	2017/2018	2018/2019	% Increase/Decrease Subject to Rounding
Brecon Beacons National Park	29,206	27,682	-5.22
Fire Service	3,221,030	3,250,883	0.93
Coroners Court	66,630	89,106	33.73

Abertillery & Llanhilleth Community Council
Council Offices, Mitre Street, Abertillery. NP13 1AE.
(Telephone 01495 217323)

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Annex 4

BUDGET FOR 2019/20

Proposals from Clr Steve Bard

Proposed Additional Spend:-

- Events £15,000 – proposal for £2k per ward for events plus a central fund of £5k for larger project(s).
- Young Person Initiatives £5,000 – To support youth organisations eg Youth Café to extend hours or activities plus look at new initiatives eg Summer Playschemes etc funded by Community Council.
- TV for Chamber £1,000 – One off purchase to enable chamber to be used for training + maybe provide income at a later date.
- Community Asset Transfer of top layer of Car Park £5,000 – To arrange transfer control of Car Park to ALCC and extended opening hours from 08:30 to 22:00 for a 3 month initial trial with a view to making this a permanent move to make the night time trade more accessible in Abertillery Town Centre
- A Clerical Assistant £7,000 – to enhance staff team as duties increase

TOTAL SPEND £33,000

Proposed Savings:-

- Members Wards Donations £2,000 – As we have increased the Council Grant Scheme substantially so propose to cut to £100 per Councillor
- Winterfest + Panto – These should be included in events budget and not single line items. Saving £3,500
- Council Funding (Grants) £5k + Donation Spending? £13k. I propose that there is uncertainty about these 2 headings with nearly £20k budgeted. Both considerably underspent + I propose that we combine these on one line. Council Grants/Donations £12,000 giving a £6,000 saving.

TOTAL SAVING £11,5000

Budget 18/19 - £112,916.23

Budget 2018/18	£112,916.23
Proposed Additional Spend	£33,0000
Sub Total	£145,916.23
Proposed Savings	£11,5000
Proposed 19/20 precept	£134,416.23

Increase of £21,500 or 19% increase

Reserve Fund

I would propose that the £15,000 for Defibrillators which is to be purchased through reserves in 2018/19 is **NOT** budgeted in 2019/20.

There is $6k from unfinished projects from previous Council which should now NO LONGER be ring fenced and even if they have been with the reserve fund standing over £30,000 I believe it would be better to look to raise our funds in a planned way over say 3 years rather than try and do a massive hit in 2019/20.

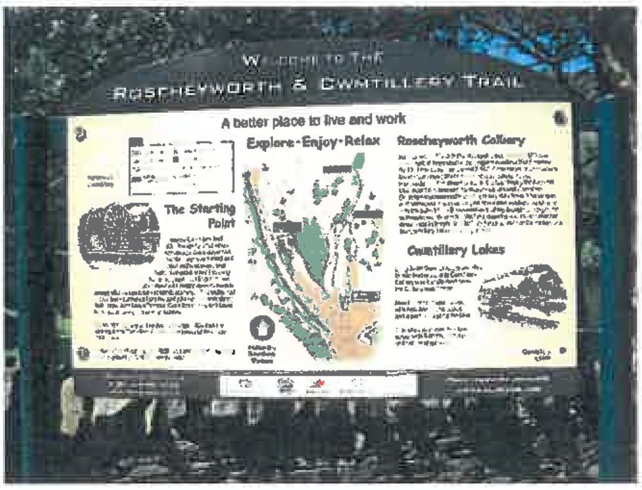
There is also £2,000 for toilets budgeted but unlikely to be sued so this could additionally be moved to reserves for future use.

Agenda Item 7

C.A.N.C.O.

Solar Farm Grant Application

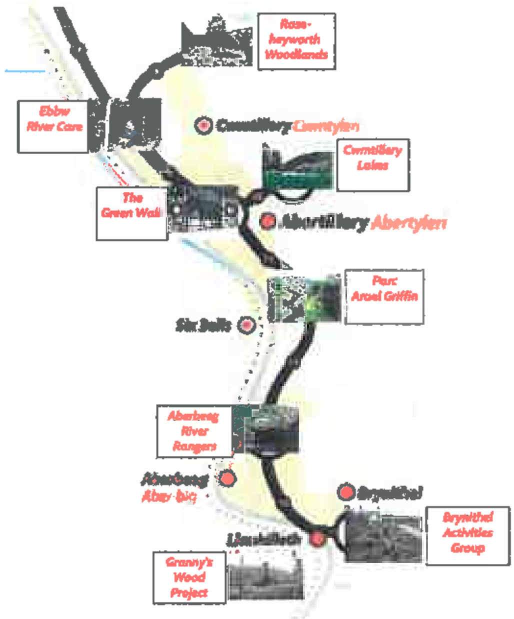
Presented To Abertillery & Llanhilleth Community Council



Dear Councillors

I have been asked to submit the following Application for consideration for funding from the Solar Farm Grant on behalf of C.A.N.C.O. (Cwmtillery Area Network of Community Organisations).

The Purpose of this project is to facilitate the setting up of a Country Park within the Abertillery area., as illustrated by the map below.



The Grant monies if allocated would be split between several sub projects.

Roseheyworth Woodlands

- Construction of two large out door all weather Class Rooms.
- Reconstruction of wetland pond, new fencing and access gate.
- Relaying of paths to provide disabled access.
- Provision of Seating and low-level solar lighting.
- Purchase of Ride on Mower and Trailer.
- ***£20,000***

Cwmtillery Heritage Center

- Partial Conversion of sports pavilion to Heritage center displaying the History of the Cwmtillery Valley, incorporating Cafe and Toilet and Car park facilities.

- Training including hygiene and first aid certification.

£6000

Cwmtillery Lakes Activity area

- Dredging and restocking of Lake.

- Construction of new fishing posts and jetty to facilitate Kayak training.

- Improving disabled access to memorial garden

£5000

Mountain Bike Trails

- To facilitate the setting up of trails

£1000

Heritage Trails

- To make Improvements to access and foot paths and signage

£1000

Restoration and painting Pit Head memorial

- Wheels and Walls.

£1000

Promotion of Tourism

- Publicity, information Displays and Maps.

£1000

Total application £35,000

The Solar Farm Grant spent in this way will leave a lasting and sustainable legacy for the community while promoting wide community participation in both the planning and delivery of the project.

It forms part of a much bigger more ambitious plan to link Well-being, the environment and promotion of tourism, training and employment.

The Roseheyworth woodlands is linked by a trail to Cwmtillery lakes, and links in to several existing walking and biking trails, which in turn link the whole community from Swfrydd to Cwmtillery.

The out door class rooms will be used by local schools, and organizations for field trips and exhibitions, New pathways will allow disabled access through the nature reserve and Wetlands.

There will be ample opportunities for the youth, in skills development during the construction of the project including elements of sustainable energy production, management of wetland and pond Habitats. It is hoped that this part of the project will promote exercise and healthy living volunteering and community engagement.

Cwmtillery Lake is the gateway to the Cwmtillery Valley; improvements to the lakeside facilities will encourage a range of out door activities for all ages and abilities.

Cwmtillery Heritage Center, Sited adjacent to Cwmtillery Lake will provide a focal point for many activities and start point for several Heritage walking trails, and Bike trails well as providing information Maps and refreshments.

These proposals are set out to encourage local organizations to work together in delivering these projects and providing sustainable improvements to our community.

C.A.N.C.O. Organisation Details:

Chairman: Jamie Godwin

Treasurer: Kerry Livesy

Yours Rob Phillips