

OFFICIAL ATTENDANCE OF RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL'S CHARITY FOR THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED CABINET COMMITTEE.

Minutes of the meeting of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Charity for the Visually Impaired Cabinet Committee on the 28th February 2017 at 2pm at the Council Headquarters, Clydach Vale.

County Borough Councillors in attendance:-

G Hopkins – Chairman

M Norris

M Forey

RCT Council:-

L Bridgman, Y Powell, S Evans

Cardiff Institute for the Blind:-

K Harris – Director of Operations

4. UPDATE TO THE LEADER'S SCHEME OF DELEGATION

The Head of Legal – Corporate & Democratic Services informed Members that he had been notified of an amendment which had been made to the Leader's Scheme of Delegation (under Part3A of the Council's Constitution) namely that Councillor M. Norris had replaced Councillor R. Bevan on the Committee.

5. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, there were no declarations of interest made pertaining to items contained within the agenda.

6. MINUTES

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of 7th July, 2016 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

7. UPDATE FROM THE DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS, CARDIFF INSTITUTE FOR THE BLIND

The Director of Operations, Cardiff Institute for the Blind, Mr K Harris, provided the Trustees with an update on the success of a recent Big Lottery Fund bid and wider service developments.

It was explained that following the success of a recent application, the organisation had been awarded £500,000 with excellent feedback which complimented their consulting and evidencing. The award would fund a sustainable four year project which would run from April 2017, to work with existing sports and leisure organisations to ensure they are better available and accessible to people with sight

loss. This would include a range of different improvements such as ensuring venues are accessible, better lighting, large print signage and welcoming staff who have an understanding of their needs. Mr Harris advised that the project would entail the recruitment of three new members of staff; one for the Swansea area, one for Cardiff and one for RCT. It was explained that the interview process has already taken place but unfortunately, due to the skill demands, they were still recruiting for the RCT post.

The Chair questioned the responsibilities of the role and it was explained that the successful applicant would be pro-active in speaking to facilitators of voluntary organisations about ways in which they could make simple changes which would not only benefit people with sight loss, but potentially increase their customer intake and revenue. The applicant's main focus would be to work with different teams to ensure people with sight loss know of the opportunities and facilities available.

The Head of Service, Short Term Intervention emphasised the need for the Council and CIB to work in unity, to avoid duplication of the work conducted by the Sensory Service Team. Mr Harris spoke positively on this idea commenting that it would be beneficial to utilise all available contacts to ensure the services in RCT for visually impaired residents continues to be delivered competently.

The Trustees recognised the importance of the duties and the desire to recruit the correct candidate. Questions formulated around the recruitment process and whether all avenues were being utilised. Mr Harris assured that the post was advertised on a number of recruitment websites with officers adding that it would be made available on the RCT website also.

One Trustee questioned whether the funding awarded was allocated to three areas proportionally depending on the size but it was advised that there were no separate allocations per area and that the target was as a whole.

The Chair recognised that the advice given to the groups and centres could range from small improvements such as larger printed signs to greater improvements which may require funding and questioned if the bid would cover these. Mr Harris explained that if improvements should require investment, they would look into further funding such as Community Chest Grants and Sports Council for Wales Grants.

The Head of Service, Short Term Intervention, drew attention to self running groups such as tennis and walking groups which have the potential to be developed as the visually impaired community do not currently have access. The officer recommended DEWIS as a well-populated informative website, commenting that the use of existing frameworks would save time and add value to small groups in the local community.

Trustees agreed that it would be beneficial to first establish the interests of the visually impaired person, and then advise of the local services available to them.

One Trustee raised concerns in respect of the hard to reach individuals, commenting that not all individuals would feel comfortable attending groups which identify with them for their sight loss. The officer agreed that this is the case with many individuals but the concept of the proposed project meant there was a focus to improve all community groups, not ones specifically arranged for people with sight loss.

The officer advised the Committee of another staffing change which would take place at the RCT office, as the case manager had been successful in her application for the Cardiff project role. The Trustees were assured that to maintain the growing success of the office, the handover was being closely managed to ensure a coherent approach. It was explained that due to various new initiatives such as the launch of the National Council Service and Time to Talk telephone service, the role had evolved so it was important to ensure the individual is clear in their duties.

The Chair took the opportunity to thank the Director for his update and congratulate him on the successful lottery bid, commenting that it would be beneficial for the project to be launched across Cwm Taf, in line with the duties of the new Future Generations Act.

It was **RESOLVED**:

- a) That a meeting be held in September, 2017 to discuss progress of the project and future funding options

8. RHONDDA CYNON TAF TRUST FUND FOR VISUALLY IMPAIRED PEOPLE

The Head of Service, Short Term Intervention, updated the Trustees of the 'Rhondda Cynon Taf Trust Fund for Blind and Partially Sighted People in RCT' on the service that 'Cardiff Institute for the Blind' was delivering within Rhondda Cynon Taff.

The officer first took the opportunity to update the Trustees regarding the charity's success in obtaining alternative funding and undertaking multiple funding bids to sustain services within Rhondda Cynon Taff.

It was explained that there were currently 342 people RCT citizens signed up to the CIB contact list which provides continuous support and engagement. The Trustees were referred to section 5.4 of the report where a range of services provided were outlined:-

- CIB continue to facilitate and support social groups in Aberdare, Mountain Ash, Pontypridd, Rhydfelin and Ferndale for people who are blind or partially sighted.
- CIB continue to address any issues resulting from home visits and the service continues to provide emotional support to service users. In addition CIB have recently developed a new service called ('Time to Talk' (TtT)) similar to the telebefriending service currently provided but aims more to focus primarily on supporting those people who are newly diagnosed.
- CIB continue to work in partnership with RNIB (in order to signpost individuals to the organisations Counselling and welfare rights services), the Council's sensory impairment service and the Cwm Taf UHB eye clinic liaison officer.
- CIB continue to signpost individuals to relevant agencies and accept referrals for services from the Council's sensory and rehabilitation Team.

- CIB continue to raise awareness of the services they provide by attending and facilitating promotional events. Between August and October they visited Prince Charles Hospitals, Festivals, Tesco stores Community Centres and Council events (e.g. Big Bite Welsh Bite 2016)
- CIB continue to provide information and advice about the services they provide via a quarterly newsletter, telephone, website, facebook and twitter.

The officer advised that RNIB had a range of literature available which was not currently promoted in RCT but that this could be an aspect to improve on in the future.

The Trustees were pleased with contents contained within the report, commenting that it would be useful to receive further information in respect of the number of visually impaired residents signed up to the contact list in comparison to the number who actively engage with the service it provides.

The meeting adjourned at 14:40pm

**Councillor G Hopkins
Chair**