



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL RCT CHARITY FOR THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED CABINET COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the RCT Charity for the Visually Impaired Cabinet Committee meeting held on Wednesday, 19 December 2018 at 2.00 pm at the Block F, The Pavilions, Cambrian Park. Clydach Vale, Tonypany, CF40 2XX.

County Borough Councillors - RCT Charity for the Visually Impaired Cabinet Committee Members in attendance:-

Councillor G Hopkins (Chair)

Councillor C Leyshon Councillor R Lewis

Officers in attendance

Mr G Isingrini, Group Director Community & Children's Services
Mr A Wilkins, Head of Legal - Corporate & Democratic Services
Ms. L Bridgman- Head of Service, Short Term Intervention, Community Care
Ms Y Powell - Contracts Officer, Purchasing and Commissioning Team

1 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

As in accordance with the Members Code of Conduct there were no declarations of interest pertaining to the agenda.

2 APOLOGY

An apology of absence was received from County Borough Councillor M Norris.

3 MINUTES

RESOLVED to agree that the minutes of the 28th February 2017 were an accurate reflection of the meeting.

4 RHONDDA CYNON TAF TRUST FUND FOR VISUALLY IMPAIRED PEOPLE

The Head of Service, Short Term Intervention, Community Care provided Members with an update regarding the services currently provided by Cardiff Institute for the Blind (t/a RNIB Cymru) to citizens within Rhondda Cynon Taf, which are funded from the Trust Fund, whose reserves are now diminished.

Members were reminded that Since April 2012 Cardiff Institute for the Blind (CIB) t/a RNIB Cymru had been providing services to visually impaired people in RCT at an annual cost of £33,000. The Head of Service also commented upon the new project funded by the Big Lottery which engages with visually impaired clients in RCT and Merthyr which encourages participation into mainstream community leisure sport and interest activities.

Members were advised that following a meeting between CIB and Council officers regarding the trust fund and the diminishing funds, CIB advised that they did not have alternative funding to continue the current service that they were providing within Rhondda Cynon Taf, despite efforts to seek alternative funding avenues. It was added that an option to explore the continuation of the RCT Contact line service by providing a volunteer staff member, this person to be based within their Cardiff branch was being discussed. The Head of Service also confirmed that the community social groups that CIB assist in supporting (i.e. Cynon Valley Vision, Pontypridd Group, the Mountain Ash Group and the SIDS group) could become self-sustaining.

The Head of Service continued her update by advising that whilst Trust Fund monies continue to be available, Senior Officers of the Council will work collaboratively with the Director of Operations for CIB to continue exploring options to sustain the current service that they provide for visually impaired people in RCT.

Members were referred to section 6 of the report where it was proposed that the Trust Fund releases the remaining CCLA (Church Charities and Local Authorities) investments in order that these funds could be used to support the service for (approximately) one additional year 2019-2020.

Members commented upon the positive work of CIB and the impact of withdrawal of its services on the residents of the County Borough. Members commented upon the proposal to release the funds and the Head of Service confirmed that if such funds were released for this purpose then due to the limited funds subsequently available the Trust Fund would be 'wound up' during the period January - March 2020.

Members discussed the work of CIB further and welcomed the news that some of the community social groups could become self-sustaining. Following a query the Head of Service confirmed that CIB did not deliver any of the Councils statutory obligations or duties in this area and that the provision was an enhancement on the services already provided by the Council. The Chairman spoke of previous conversations and meetings that had taken place over the years with CIB, were they had been advised that the trust fund money would be coming to an end, with both Officers and Members stressing the need for alternative funding arrangements to be sourced by CIB.

The Members commented on the austerity measures facing the Council and the Councils approach to reviewing provisions to ensure efficiency and service provision going forward. Members commented on the need for transitional arrangements to be taken forward in advance of the trust fund being 'wound up.'

Following lengthy discussions it was **RESOLVED**:

1. To approve the release of the remaining CCLA (Church Charities and Local Authorities) investments in order that these funds can be used to support the transition and winding up of the existing service for (approximately) an additional year 2019-2020;
2. That the Council's Finance (Treasury Management Department), which manages the Trust Fund on a day to day basis, be instructed to release the remaining funds in accordance with 1. above;

3. To note that due to the limited funds available the Trust Fund would thereafter be 'wound up' during the period January-March 2020;
4. To note that once the Trust Fund has been 'wound up' there will be no Cardiff Institute for the Blind (t/a RNIB Cymru) office base (currently in Courthouse Street Pontypridd) within the Rhondda Cynon Taf area;
5. To note that whilst the 'New Places, New Experiences' project funded by the Big Lottery Fund and delivered by an RNIB co-ordinator, will still provide a service to people within Rhondda Cynon Taf, this service is different to that which is being delivered by the Trust Fund monies.

This meeting closed at 1.25 pm

**Cllr G Hopkins
Chairman.**