Notes on Wrexham and Flintshire Area Committee Meeting – 17th September 2019

Attended by: Cllrs Coles and Copeman and the clerk

AVOW

John Gallanders from AVOW outlined the services offered to community organisations in Wrexham. He covered the different avenues of funding available to organisations, some specifically available for projects involving young people, others where two organisations are working in conjunction with each other (community councils should consider this option as funders like to see cohesion and more funding would be potentially available when a community council works with community groups).

John Gallanders advised members that the Steve Morgan Foundation (Redrow) was again supporting projects that help children and families, people with physical or learning disabilities, the elderly, or those that are socially disadvantaged in Wrexham (as well as North Wales, Merseyside, Cheshire and North Shropshire).

Funding drop in sessions are available at AVOW – appointments are required to talk about a specific project.

AVOW load equipment for presentations etc. free of charge; display boards, projectors, PA systems, gazebos (OCC has used them in the past).

News and Reports from Councils

One council has undertaken to encourage a wildflower area.

The same council (Rossett) are reviewing an old project to revamp the closed public toilets into a hub.

Litter picks going in many areas.

Mold - Theatr Clwyd is to stage its first major community production on the streets of Mold this October and will retell the story of the Mold Riots of 1869, marking the 150th anniversary of the disturbances.

The Chairman advised the meeting that in the near future all planning applications (new build??) will be required to incorporate Sustainable Drainage up to the curtilage of the property – members were not sure if this was an adequate requirement as the drainage on the other side of the curtilage may not be sustainable.

Independent Review Panel Recommendations

Members were advised that Julie James - Minister for Housing and Local Government has only undertaken to discuss 3 of the 47 of the recommendations from the Independent Review Panel (IRP). Members were disappointed with this as the process followed by the IRP had been lengthy and costly and now it feels as though it wasn’t worth carrying out. Members were encouraged to respond to any consultation on the Green Paper which is due out in the Autumn.

The three items on the Green Paper could be:

Recommendation 1 – pages 27 - 29

Community and Town Councils should prepare an annual report setting out their progress to date and priorities for the forthcoming year.

Members were concerned about the template of the report and the depth required – taking into account that some community councils have a very small precept and how much cost would be added to it when undertaking this process i.e. level of distribution, especially in rural areas, printing costs, bi lingual costs. Clarification as to whether it would be a mandatory obligation to deliver to reach home or if local businesses could be use i.e. corner shops etc.

Members asked if OVW would be able to produce a template which could be amended as necessary should the Green Paper progress to a White Paper

Recommendation 2 – pages 19 to 35 in the independent review

In order to be able to exercise the General Power of Competence (GPC), Town and Community Councils would require two thirds of their members to be elected not co-opted and for their Clerk to be qualified to the minimum standard of CiLCA.

Some councils feel restricted by the Section 137 limits, therefore may welcome the GPC. It was felt by some attending the meeting that GPC works better in a larger Community Council or Town Council, not those with a precept at the lower end of the scale.

One member questioned why councillors who are co-opted are not taken into account with this Power.

Recommendation 3 – page 22 of the independent review.

All clerks must hold a professional qualification and CILCA should be the expected minimum qualification.

A core package of training should be mandatory for all councillors as a requirement of acceptance of office, i.e. Code of Conduct, Basic Council training and Council finance.

Next meeting 14th January 2020 at Gwersyllt Community Resource Centre (7pm)