

COMMUNITY LIAISON COMMITTEE

Minutes of a special remote meeting held on 4th November 2021.

The Committee agenda is available [here](#).

The Meeting recording is available [here](#).

Present: Councillor R.M. Birch (Vice-Chair in the Chair), Councillors J. Aviet, G.D.D. Carroll, N.P. Hodges, M.J.G. Morgan, S.M. Perkes, A.R. Robertson and L.O. Rowlands.

Representing Town and Community Councils: Councillors S. Hodges (Barry Town Council), G. Thomas (Llantwit Major Town Council), B. Morris (Colwinston Community Council), S. Griffiths (Dinas Powys Community Council), D. Reed (Llangan Community Council), G. Smith (Llanmaes Community Council), G. Marks (Michaelston le Pitt with Leckwith Community Council), G. Kellen (Pendoylan Community Council), A. Cory (Substitute) (St. Georges and St. Brides Super Ely Community Council) and I. Perry (St. Nicholas and Bonvilston Community Council)

Also present: Councillors G. John and Dr. I.J. Johnson

512 ANNOUNCEMENT –

Prior to the commencement of the business of the Committee, the Chair read the following statement: “May I remind everyone present that the meeting will be live streamed as well as recorded via the internet and this recording archived for future viewing.”

513 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from Councillors S.M. Hanks (Chair), C.A. Cave, A.C. Parker, R.A. Penrose and M.R. Wilson (Vale of Glamorgan Members) and Councillors H. Weddell (Cowbridge with Llanblethian Town Council), M. Cuddy (Penarth Town Council), Dr. A. Rees (Llancarfan Community Council), R. Thomas (Llandow Community Council), S. Bonnar (Llanfair Community Council), A. Phillips (Peterston Super Ely Community Council), M. Jeffreys (St. Donats Community Council), R. Sexton (Wenvoe Community Council) and C. Hawkins (Wick Community Council).

514 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations of interest were received.

515 REQUEST FOR CONSIDERATION FROM COLWINSTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL – BROWN SIGNAGE: A48 –

The Head of Neighbourhood Services & Transport, with support from the Operational Manager for Regeneration, provided a PowerPoint Presentation to the Committee in response to the request.

The presentation set out the criteria for when white on brown tourist signs could be used, the qualification criteria for the application process and the status of the review exercise for the current Tourism Signing Policy for the Vale of Glamorgan Council.

Following the Officer's presentation, the Committee debated on the following advantages and points of importance in relation to the use and installation of brown signage across the Vale of Glamorgan area:

- All tourist facilities across the Vale of Glamorgan, including Public Houses ('Pubs'), had taken a significant hit in the last two years due to social restrictions put in place because of the national pandemic. Therefore, anything that could be done to support tourist facilities going forward would be beneficial and welcome.
- Brown signs support a sense of place and significance and encourage repeated visits to the area.
- Pubs were a hub for their local community and helped to maintain a sense of community as well as minimize social exclusion.
- Pub businesses could not survive on local custom alone and therefore needed to be accessible and easily located by a wider customer base.
- The A48 running through the length of the Vale of Glamorgan was a primary route for out of area customers to access tourist facilities in the Vale.

In addition, the Committee debated upon the following restrictions and disparities evident because of Welsh Government (WG) legislation and the subsequent impact on the Vale of Glamorgan Tourism Signing Policy:

- WG Legislation stated that brown signage was not to advertise businesses and should be directional and not promotional. The council had a duty to comply with WG legislation and submit all applications for brown signage to WG for approval.
- As a result of historical WG grant funding received back in 2007 via Creative Rural Communities, some Pubs within the Vale of Glamorgan were signposted by name. However, under current legislation and the Council's current policy, the Council was unable to grant such a request and was required to follow specific legislation for the use of brown signs. Therefore, some existing signs for pubs within the Vale of Glamorgan were against current policy, but the Council would not remove existing brown signage that did not comply with the policy.
- As a result of WG legislation, the current Vale of Glamorgan Signing Policy was not flexible enough to help support tourist facilities dealing with the aftermath effects of the national pandemic.

- Due to the nature of more rural areas in the Vale of Glamorgan, some Pubs were easier to locate than others however, the more difficult to find Pubs were not necessarily the ones clearly signposted.
- The current review of the Council's Tourism Signing Policy provided the opportunity to make a specific case for the use of brown signage to promote Vale of Glamorgan Pubs and to meet the Council's moral duty to help support struggling businesses.
- Both WG and the Council want to minimize sign clutter where possible to avoid unnecessarily distracting drivers for obvious health and safety reasons.
- It was unclear within WG Legislation as to why the advertising of local businesses upon brown signs was prohibited and what WG considered the definition of advertising to be.

In response to Member comments during debate, the Officers raised the following points:

- The Council wished to promote all tourist facilities across the Vale of Glamorgan as much as possible through a variety of innovative approaches in addition to brown signage, for example:
 - engaging with vloggers to advertise tourist facilities more widely, and
 - signposting pubs within public events i.e. pub stops along the walking routes for the upcoming Walking Month in March 2022.
- The cost of implementing Brown Signage along a major road, such as the A48, would be higher than in more low-speed road areas due to the requirement to disassemble the existing signage, re-manufacture the sign itself and then re-assemble.
- In relation to the specific example provided by Colwinston Council (as set out within the request for consideration) and the requirement for the Sycamore Tree Pub to be signposted from the Colwinston sign along the A48, the Council had offered to apply to WG for the addition of a fork and spoon symbol to the sign by way of a compromise not entirely in line with the Council's current policy.
- Including a fork and spoon symbol on signage rather than a specific business name would mitigate any future signage changes and subsequent costs because of the business changing ownership and/or name.
- The anticipated financial outturn for the Neighbourhood and Transport Services Budget was approximately a £1.5m overspend. Therefore, no spare funds for signage alterations or additions were available.
- Brown signage was not a statutory function of the Council, but it was committed to supporting the tourism sector.
- The Council ran an EU funded project in 2004 to support pubs to diversify into additional income streams via 'Pub is The Hub,' the Prince of Wales' Charity. The Council continued to work with the charity without funding to support projects, more recently on a pub in Barry. Moving forward the Council was supporting the charity in a bid for funding to renew its work in Wales.
- Any person could apply for a white on brown sign to direct customers to their business, in either a rural or more urban setting, but the sign application must meet legislation and the sign funded by the business itself.

In conclusion, the Chair summarised the consensus of the debate and stated that the Committee did not agree with Welsh Government legislation because it was not sufficiently helpful to Pubs and communities with no other local facilities nearby and did not sufficiently acknowledge the role of the Pub in community life.

AGREED –

(1) T H A T the comments of the Committee, as set out above, regarding the importance and advantages of brown signage across the Vale of Glamorgan be passed to Cabinet.

(2) T H A T Cabinet be requested to write to Welsh Government on behalf of the Council as a whole regarding the restrictions and disparities caused by its current legislation as set out above.

Reasons for recommendation

(1) To ensure that Cabinet is presented with the views of the Committee for its consideration alongside the 'Proposed Amendments to existing Tourism Signing Policy' report scheduled for consideration by Cabinet in the near future.

(2) To promote effective change to Welsh Government Legislation and subsequent Vale of Glamorgan Policy to better support local tourism businesses and in particular the use of brown signage to advertise Public Houses.