

# **CYNGOR CYMUNED CWMLLYNFELL COMMUNITY COUNCIL**

## **MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD AT CWMLLYNFELL HALL ON MONDAY 7<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2011 AT 7.00P.M.**

**PRESENT:** Mrs Gwenda Thomas AM presided  
Mr Christopher Ashman – Programme Director – Western Valleys SRA  
  
Councillor C E Richards - Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

### **REPRESENTING CWMLLYNFELL COMMUNITY COUNCIL:**

**COUNCILLORS:** R Evans, V B Fox, C Jones, M Jones, M C Jones, D Lloyd, D C Phillips,  
and J C Rees  
Mr E P Lloyd Jones - Clerk of the Council

#### **1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for their absence were received from Councillors M Evans and D B Thomas.

#### **2. WESTERN VALLEYS STRATEGIC REGENERATION AREA**

The meeting had been convened by Mrs Gwenda Thomas AM as a result of the Council's representations following the rejection of the application by the Council for funding from the Western Valleys Strategic Regeneration Area towards its cemetery extension and improvement project.

Prior to this meeting the Clerk of the Council had met with Mr C. Ashman in order to acquaint him with the community and the neighbouring areas in Neath Port Talbot, Carmarthenshire and Powys.

The Clerk of the Council explained that the Council had been dissatisfied with the lack of information and guidance under the Western Valleys SRA. The application process under the Swansea Valley Area Regeneration Plan had been conducted at short notice and lacked guidance. The Council remained satisfied that the project qualified under several of the identified needs in the Swansea Valley VARP. It was of concern however that the Community of Cwmllynfell would not benefit from regeneration initiatives despite the fact that there was a clear need. It was particularly disappointing to note that projects had been approved for assistance in areas that were ranked as less deprived than Cwmllynfell in the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation. It was obvious that a case prevailed for the community to receive investment towards regeneration in categories such as tourism, employment, training, health centre provision, village centres improvement, community car scheme introduction, development of the community halls etc.

Mr Ashman outlined the objectives of the Western Valleys SRA and explained the measures which had been put in place, including a £1m tourism package, and measures relating to Key Skills, Low Carbon initiatives, Renewable Energy, Improvements to Social Housing and the Arbed Strategic Energy Performance Investment Programme. He also referred to the measures introduced in Ystradgynlais under the Economic Inactivity agenda which included proposals to provide outreach facilities in places such as Cwmllynfell.

Mrs Gwenda Thomas AM referred to the exclusion of the community from the Communities First Amman Valley Cross Boundary Partnership and the resultant frustrations when the Council's application in respect of the cemetery project was rejected under the Western Valleys SRA. She also indicated that she had made representations to the Minister explaining that small communities such as Cwmllynfell required the deployment of personnel in order to drive forward the objectives of Strategic Regeneration. She also emphasised that the programme should take into account and assess the negative effect of some decisions such as the proposal to close Rhiwfawr Primary School. Her office had already carried out some work in this respect which could be utilised by the programme.

Mr Ashman emphasised that there were a range of options that could be implemented to assist the community during the two year programme of intervention, and suggested that they explore the links between the community and some of the strategic programmes in the Western Valleys, notably:

- Tourism - a need to explore any contribution the community might be able to make to their strategic tourism objectives, and;
- Support for the unemployed - how might the existing Workways project and the new Ystradgynlais Jobmatch project reach local unemployed people.

A discussion ensued on the issue of capacity. Members of the community council had good ideas but lacked the capacity to develop them into funding proposals. The rejection of the cemetery proposal had affected motivation to work with the Western Valleys programme. The forum for the Swansea Valley was agreed to be useful to the programme in terms of helping affirm the contribution of project proposals to valley needs but from the community council's perspective it did not appear from experience to date to be the route by which investment to address local needs might be secured. It was feared therefore that the failings of the Communities First programme would be repeated. The role of Menter Castell Nedd and Groundwork as potential sources of capacity support were discussed.

**Noted that:**

1. Mr Ashman agreed that he would explore the matter further with the Western Valleys team so as to implement the following actions:
  - Tourism programme manager to visit the village within two weeks;
  - An officials group (Western Valleys team, Menter, Groundwork and Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council) to visit for 2 days to discuss the needs and priorities for the community. Information regarding a recent household survey undertaken in Rhiwfawr on behalf of Mrs Gwenda Thomas' office to be utilised in this exercise.
  - Date for visit to be confirmed within the next week with the visit itself to take place within the next month.
2. The Council confirmed that funding had been sought from the Aggregates Levy Fund Wales but if this was unsuccessful advice on improving the fit with the Western Valleys SRA might be obtained from the officials' visit.

**Agreed that** a further meeting would be held after three months to discuss progress.

The meeting terminated at 8.25pm.