

## **INDUSTRIAL COMMUNITIES CROSS PARTY GROUP**

### **Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> June 2019 in the Media Briefing Room, Senedd, Cardiff Bay**

#### **1. Present**

Vikki Howells AM (Chair); Cllr David White, Bridgend CBC; Gerard McHugh ICA Wales; Jayne Brencher, Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC; Mark Williams, Welsh Government;; Del Mawdsley, Welsh Government; Antony Boulter, Caerphilly CBC; Cllr Sean Morgan, Caerphilly CBC; Jeff Peters, Bridgend CBC; Cllr Gareth Jones, Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC; Craig Lawton # ; Joan Dixon, ICA; Alun Taylor, Coalfield Regeneration Trust; Cllr Susan Morgans, Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC; Robin Lewis , Office of Vikki Howells AM; Dawn Bowden AM; Jillian Purvis, Office of Huw Iranca Davies AM; Jenny Rathbone AM; Helen Cunningham, Bevan Foundation; Matt Williams/Carys Nurse/Rhys Rowlands Office of Lee Waters AM; Hugh Iranca Davies AM; Lee Waters AM; Craig Lawton, Office of Suzy Davies AM.

#### **2. Apologies**

Llyr Huws Gruffyd AM; Helen Mary Jones AM; Alex Still, Office of Hefin David AM; Cllr Graham Thomas, Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC; Cllr Geraint Thomas, Merthyr CBC; Cllr Richard Young, Bridgend CBC; Ieuan Sherwood, Bridgend CBC; Cllr Robert Wood, Neath Port Talbot CBC; Cllr Dai Davies, Blaenau Gwent CBC; Councillor Neil Waite, Torfaen CBC.

#### **3. Welcome**

Vikki Howells welcomed Hannah Blythyn and Dr Joan Dixon to the meeting.

#### **4. Hannah Blythyn**

Hannah Blythyn explained that her duties included regeneration responsibilities in Wales. She emphasized the importance of town centres as giving towns a sense of place and pride. Although £800

milion has been invested in Welsh towns centres in recent years, there is a need for better coordination of activity and refocusing of support. The Welsh Government is keen to work with stakeholders to strengthen the approach. Existing tools could be utilised more such as enforcement action on derelict property. Best practice needs to be spread. A good example is the location of the Council's HQ in Colwyn Bay town centre, with the obvious benefits that provides. Community involvement is very important, not just in relation to BIDs, but also at the grass roots level.

## **5. Ford Bridgend**

Dr Joan Dixon pointed to the 11 000 jobs lost in the industry in the last 2 years. The ICA will be lobbying the UK Government on the tools needed to address this issues (state aid resources and usage, The Industrial Strategy, etc.). The UK has lagged behind other countries in the development of electric vehicles. Jeff Peters indicated that, although major redundancies were expected the speed and the actual closure has come as a shock. No deal brexit may have precipitated the speed of the announcement. The Response Team will be meeting, which coordinates help for workers. The Taskforce has been announced by The Welsh Government. David White pointed to the loss of quality, well paid jobs which were accessed by people from across South Wales. Lee Waters expressed concern about the impact of suppliers to Ford (possibly 2500 jobs lost as a consequence). He saw Brexit's role as overplayed in terms of the next 2 years but underplayed for over the next 10 years.

## **6. Places with Purpose**

[https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5bb773c49b7d1510743e696f/t/5bb8fc8b1905f431b7289d7c/1538849934619/booklet\\_towns\\_web.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5bb773c49b7d1510743e696f/t/5bb8fc8b1905f431b7289d7c/1538849934619/booklet_towns_web.pdf)

Dr Joan Dixon explained how The ICA serviced 2 All Party Parliamentary Groups dealing with Post Brexit Funding and The Former Coalfields. The ICA worked the Centre for cities, The Coalfields Regeneration Trust and The Key Cities Group to produce Places for Purpose. The views expressed in the document related to

the need to consider places outside the big cities, a need for serious thinking on the current emphasis on the latter. With the right economic policies, the smaller towns and cities could make a major contribution to the National Economy. They have a distinctive offer; a sense of community, less pollution, less congestion, less housing pressure, space for development. They have suffered from a lack of investment in infrastructure (rail and bus, for example). Jayne Brencher asked about the infrastructure in South Wales compared to Bristol and questioned the attractiveness of the former. Lee Waters wondered whether a focus on infrastructure and skills is the only approach needed. He pointed to the Foundation Economy and 'grounded' local firms. He saw a key role for anchor institutions (especially in the public sector) to develop procurement policies which favour the local economy (developing a critical mass for local production), something Public Service Boards are exploring.

## **7. Stronger Towns Fund**

Dr Joan Dixon provided a short history of the Stronger Towns Fund which the UK Government wishes to see available in England, Wales and Scotland, for 'left behind places'. Much detail needs to be worked out including the calculation of the Welsh allocation. It was also noted that consultation on the detail of the Shared Prosperity Fund has now been put back to next year.

GM 11/6/19