

**MEETING OF THE FULL COUNCIL OF ABERTILLERY AND LLANHILLETH
COMMUNITY COUNCIL (ALCC) HELD ON 30 October 2024 AT 7.02 pm
in the Council Chamber at Council Offices, Mitre Street, Abertillery.**

PRESENT

Councillors: Tracey Dyson (Chair), Peter Adamson, Steve Bard, Bruno Góes Maciel, Lucy Harmer, Ralph Henderson MBE, Chris Hill, Mark Lewis (via video-link), Barrie Page, Rob Phillips, Josh Rawcliffe, Nick Simmons; Bernard Wall,

Absent: Ben Owen-Jones, Glyn Smith, Mike Whatley, Graham White.

Officers: Steve Edwards (Clerk), Erika Davies (Deputy Clerk), Molly Jones (Deputy Clerk).

Others: Frankie Baker (Member of the public), Jane Mudd (Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent)

71. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Ben Owen-Jones, Mike Whatley.

72. Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

Rob Phillips, Nick Simmons and Peter Adamson for item concerning Christmas Lanterns.

73. Minutes – 25 September 2024 and 4 October 2024

Council **RESOLVED** that the minutes were a true and correct record of the meetings.

74. Bank Reconciliations

This item was moved up the agenda because the Police and Crime Commissioner had not yet arrived.

Council reviewed and accepted the bank reconciliations and payments from September 2024.

75. Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent, Jane Mudd.

1. Question from Cllr. Mike Whatley (absent)

I would be interested to know who provided the £10,000 deposit for you to stand for the PCC? If the deposit was provided by the Labour and Co-operative party, how can you truly be 'independent' and genuinely hold the heads of the police to account where it has become all too apparent since the general election the two-tier policing that currently exists in this country?

The Commissioner introduced herself and she said was hoping to meet all Community and Town councils in her area. She explained that all four of the main political parties had put forward candidates for the post of Commissioner and they had all paid for the deposits for their candidates. There were no independent candidates.

She was here to represent all citizens of Gwent and had sworn an oath of impartiality when she took up office six months ago. She does not recognise the term two-tier policing within Gwent.

Initials

Date

2. Question from Cllr. Rob Phillips

What is the Police policy towards the use of illegal Electric Motor Cycles by underaged Children?

The Commissioner could give an overview as this was mainly an operational matter There is considerable police activity on this subject. Misuse of electric bikes and scooters and off road bikes are of concern to the public in Gwent. A particular concern in this area was the increased damage to the landscape by off road bikes. There was an operation currently running to seize bikes. There was an increased use of drones and an investment in preventative activities, which include some funds for diversionary activity.

3. Questions from Cllr. Bruno Goes Maciel

How is Gwent police aiming to reduce the anti-social behaviour and violent crimes in our area considering the number of response officers for Blaenau Gwent is so low? (Violence against the person, ASB and Public order offences being the top 3 as per police statistics for August)

What else can Gwent Police bring to the table to reassure our community? The Welsh-language word for police translates into English as "peace force" However, some people in our community may see the police as an ineffective service, and at times feel disenfranchised reporting incidents to the police as there is a belief that "*nothing will ever be done*", therefore compromising the capacity of the service to enact its peacekeeping role. That being exposed, *A oes heddwch?*

What is Gwent Police doing to change its corporate culture to serve our diverse communities better?

Anti-social behaviour was one of the key priorities and had attracted Home Office Investment in hot spot policing. There was in place system of hot spot patrols funded through this across areas with the highest incidents of ASB in Gwent. This includes the wards that cover Cwmbran Town Centre and the Commissioner thought this was because the concentration of anti-social activity in the Town Centre and the high levels of reporting in that area.

Previously in 2024 the Deputy Commissioner had met with the local policing team and community representatives from Abertillery and they were looking into diversionary activities also working in partnerships with the Gwent Public Service Board and Community Safety Network teams.

The Local Policing teams will also be able to put bids into Commissioner Offices funding schemes. There are also Community Safety Wardens who work with the Local Policing Teams.

4. Question from Cllr. Barrie Page

I believe the unit involved in trying to reduce the problems of off-road vehicles on the commons and on farm land are using a drone. Given how much this technology has developed in recent years are there opportunities for more extensive use of the technology? It would look to offer significant cost benefit over other methods.

The Commissioner thought this was a brilliant question, which looks to how technology is used in future to support policing. A lot can be done with this equipment being able to access remote land where illegal activity is taking place. The Drone pilots are fully trained and qualified so are able to support officers in pursuit. It also has a role when looking for missing persons. It can use live streaming footage so presents significant cost benefits for the police. It is important to recognise that the use of this technology is in support of other policing methods.

5. Question from Cllr. Chris Hill

Scenes of Crime Grant Funding - Could we have information of these grants from the Commissioner and are they ever distributed in our Community Council area especially as there's quite a bit of drug crime?

The proceeds of crime funding provided by the Home Office provides part of the PCC budget that is used to support commissioning and grant funding. There are small funding opportunities available to community groups, for revenue funding. The Funding manager can come out and advise the Council on funding proposals, especially in regard to whether proposals would meet the criteria of the funding streams.

6. Question from Cllr. Nick Simmons

Can you outline and justify why Policing in the borough is located along the heads of the valley, with no station in the remainder of the borough?

The Commissioner was newly elected and as such, hasn't had any prior involvement in decisions regarding locations. She has an interest in where stations are and where activities are taking place. She instructed officers to undertake a review of the whole police estate to identify future requirements of citizens of Gwent relating to policing. There has already been an agreement to invest £1 million in upgrading a custody suite.

The Chair then opened up the meeting for further questions from Members.

7. Question from Cllr. Steve Bard

What is the timescale for the Estate Review?

It will be completed by March 2025 at the latest but the Commissioner wants it done as soon as possible. It will help develop policies so that the right resources are in the right places as part of the overall Police and Crime Plan.

8. Question from Cllr. Chris Hill

Has any money from the scenes of crime money been spent in this area?

This type of funding is not for Capital projects as it will only fund revenue expenditure. There are other revenue sources such Children in Need, National Lottery and the Football Association of Wales (for sports funding) that community groups can apply to.

9. Question from Cllr. Josh Rawcliffe

In regards to “Two Tier Policing” does the Commissioner not recognise it or dose not believe it exists?

The Commissioner does not recognise "two tier policing" as the term is being used in the UK context, here in Gwent. If anyone has any concerns about this then they can write to her outlining their views.

10. Question from Cllr. Bruno Goes Maciel

Asking what will be done now that Welsh Government defunded the School Attachment Officers Programme?

In considering how to achieve significant financial savings the Welsh Government had to make an in-year decision to cut the funding used to support programmes which support how we deliver policing in Wales.

A new model being developed which will help build relationships between local policing teams and young people in their local communities and their schools.

The Chair of Council mentioned the good work being done by Luke, the PCSO in our area and how he works to deescalate situations. He has a good relationship with the young people of the area.

The Commissioner was happy to receive this positive feedback and will feed that back to the local team.

11. Question from Cllr. Mark Lewis

Asking about the “We Don’t Buy Crime” scheme that he had looked at on the Commissioner Website.

The Commissioner said the scheme was ongoing and one of the priorities is retail crime such as shoplifting and counterfeit goods where the policing teams work with the Local Authorities Public Protection Teams.

In finishing up the Commissioner hoped that in the future she would meet some of the Councillors in less formal settings. The Commissioner advised the Council that the Police and Crime Plan Survey exercise had now closed and there would be a number of focus groups used to test the findings of the survey.

It is expected that the plan will go before the Police and Crime Panel in January 2025 for their approval.

The Commissioner has also been involved in the recruitment process for the new Chief Constable of Gwent, there is a statutory process to follow and the Police and Crime Panel have to finally approve the appointment. She reiterated that she is here for all the citizens of Gwent.

The Chair thanked the Commissioner for her time in attending the meeting.

The Commissioner left the meeting at 7:45pm.

76. Bank Reconciliations.

The Council noted and accepted the bank reconciliations for September 2024.

77. Council Grant Applications.

The Council **RESOLVED** to agree the following grant applications.

- £1,000 for The Mitre Music Venue to provide a community space for live music and culture.
- £250 for Ebenezer Baptist Church for food, crafts and selection boxes for their Messy Christmas event.

78. Forces Boxing Promotion Event

The Council **RESOLVED** not to sponsor this event

Frankie Baker left the meeting.

79. Mission Statement.

It was explained that this was the very first part of the Finance and Government Toolkit that the Finance Committee had started work on. The Council **RESOLVED** to accept “Improving the Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council area to benefit the local residents’ lives, health and wellbeing” as the Councils mission statement.

80. Christmas Lights Grants

The Council **RESOLVED** to pay the annual Christmas Lights grants, as proposed by the Leisure and Tourism Committee, to the following organisations.

- Llanhilleth Tenants Residents Association - £3,000
- Brynithal Community Centre - £1,500
- Swfrydd Community Centre - £1,500
- Bournville Community Centre - £1,500
- Aberbeeg Tenants Residents Association - £1,500
- Pentref Tyleri - £1,500

81. Financial Regulations

The Council **RESOLVED** to accept the new NALC Model Financial Regulations with the recommended Financial Committee amendments.

82. Wreath Laying

The Council **RESOLVED** that the following will lay the official Councils Wreaths at the following Remembrance Services.

- The Chair, Tracey Dyson at the Abertillery War Memorial
- Mark Lewis at Blaenau Gwent Church
- Glyn Smith at Bournville Community Centre – Bruno Goes Marciel would substitute if Glyn Smith was unavailable.
- Barrie Page at Llanhilleth Institute War Memorial

- Ben Owen-Jones at Swffryd Community Centre – Barrie Page would substitute if Ben Owen-Jones unavailable
- Josh Rawcliffe at Aberbeeg

83. Christmas Lanterns

The Council **RESOLVED** to authorise officers to purchase 221 lanterns for Ffrindiau Tyleri and 50 lanterns for Llanhilleth Tenants Residents association at a cost of £828.49

84. Youth Representatives

The Council **RESOLVED** to co-opt the following two people as Youth Councillors for Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council.

Jackson Powell and Sophie Townsend

85. Councillor Surgeries

The Council **RESOLVED** to accept the recommendation by the Community Empowerment Committee to start Councillor Surgeries but there would need to be a formal Risk Assessment completed and signed off by the Community Empowerment committee.

It is likely that there will be an initial trial with a joint surgery with BGCBC Councillors.

86. Joint Committee of Local Councils (JCLC)

Nick Simmons gave a verbal update and the main points are below.

- The Borough is looking at a £5m deficit for the current year which is likely to mean a cut in services.
- There may be Community Asset Transfer opportunities in the future
- Borough are looking for Town Councils to fund additional CCTV cameras in their area. The Community Council area currently have 19 CCTV's funded by the Borough.
- The JCLC are looking for bi-monthly meetings
- The Borough had failed to formally respond to the 2018 Town Council Review.

87. Abertillery Bowls and Cricket Club

The Council **RESOLVED** to pay the remaining Solar Farm Grant allocation of £1,104 to the Bowls Club and agreed that this will not exclude them from further Solar Farm Grant applications in the next five years.

88. Abertillery Town Toilets

The Council agreed that this matter would be deferred to the Finance committee who would look at a survey of the Community to see if it was required, and what the actual running costs would be and report back within 12 months.

89. EGIN Power

The Council **RESOLVED** to accept Ralph Henderson's motion to apply for funding for community owned micro-hydro energy, on behalf of Abertillery Aspirations.

90. Training Courses.

Initials

Date

The Council agreed in principle that Councillors who did not attend booked training courses, without good reason, could be liable for the costs of the missed course. The Officers will bring a revised training plan to a future Council meeting that will incorporate these criteria for approval.

91. Date of next meeting.

Date set for Wednesday 27 November at 7pm

The meeting ended at 9:02 pm

Minutes produced by Steve Edwards, Clerk.

Signed as a correct record by the Chair.....

Date.....