

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF ABERTILLERY AND LLANHILLETH COMMUNITY COUNCIL
(ALCC) HELD ON 15 MAY 2019 at 7.00pm
in the Council Chamber, Mitre Street, Abertillery**

PRESENT: Councillors:

Peter Adamson, Keri Bidgood, Gill Clark, Roger Clark, Tracey Dyson, Amanda Edwards, Julie Holt (Chair) (in the Chair), Mark Lewis, Gary Oakley, Rob Phillips, Nick Simmons, Allen Rees and Trudy Williams

Officers: Steve Edwards, Deputy Clerk and Richard Gwinnell, Town Clerk
Others: Police Constable Andy Davies, Neighbourhood Police Team (for 270 below)
Police Community Support Officer Ian Williams (for 270 below)
Hugh O'Sullivan, Internal Auditor (for 271 below)

ABSENT: Councillors Perry Morgan, Glyn Smith, Bernard Wall and Graham White

265. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Glyn Smith.

266. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No members declared any personal interests.

267. MINUTES – COUNCIL – 17 APRIL 2019

Council RESOLVED that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 17 April 2019 be confirmed as a correct record, for signature by the Chair.

268. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

There were no public questions for this meeting.

269. COUNCIL ACTION LIST

The Clerk reported that the actions required arising from minutes 256(1) and (2), 261 and 262 (all from 17 April 2019) had all been completed.

A member asked if the enquiry of Tredegar Town Council (about how they managed their public toilets) could be progressed as soon as possible.

Questions were asked about one member's failure to complete training on the Member Code of Conduct. The Clerk stated that the member concerned had been offered many opportunities to attend the training and would continue to be offered every opportunity which arose. There was no value in arranging bespoke training in Abertillery (as ALCC would have to pay for numerous people, when only one ALCC member needed training, ALCC would therefore have to recruit members from other areas to attend, to make the training viable, and the ALCC member may not be able to attend anyway).

Council RESOLVED to note the updates shown in the action list.

270. POLICE REPORT

PC Andrew Davies of the Abertillery Police Neighbourhood Team commented that:

- this was the last ALCC meeting he would attend, as he was retiring in June after 30 years' service
- it had been an honour and privilege to serve the people of the Abertillery area for the last six years
- there had been many challenges for the Police in the last 10 years, e.g. with social media, technological changes and austerity impacting on society
- Police staffing numbers were under threat everywhere but the numbers in Blaenau Gwent had been increased
- he had every confidence in his colleagues and successor; local communities would be in safe hands
- everywhere had its peaks and troughs of crime and anti-social behaviour, and Abertillery had recently experienced a peak, but Abertillery was safer compared to many other areas, including all the other towns in Blaenau Gwent
- he thanked the Community Council for its support.

Members commented that the support and service given by Andy and his team was second to none, Andy and his team had always been responsive and attended meetings or dealt with issues when asked, and that Abertillery had been very well served by Andy.

Members thanked Andy, wishing him good luck and a very long and happy retirement.

Council RESOLVED to note PC Andy Davies' retirement.

PC Andy Davies and CSO Ian Williams left the meeting at this point.

271. ACCOUNTS 2017/18, ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT AND INTERNAL AUDITOR'S REPORT

The Council considered a report of the Clerk and Deputy Clerk, containing the annual return, annual governance statement, financial statements and Internal Auditor's report relating to the 2017/18 financial year. The Deputy Clerk briefly introduced the report.

The Internal Auditor (Hugh O'Sullivan) briefly outlined his experience and qualifications, for members he had not met before, and explained that this was his second year as Internal Auditor for ALCC. He reminded members that all the Council's accounts since 2014/15 (up to 31 March 2017) were currently with the Wales Audit Office awaiting sign-off, due to issues which arose in 2014/15 and were still under investigation. All the accounts since 2014/15 were likely to be qualified, as the Council had not submitted them in line with the statutory deadlines, and adjustments may be necessary when there was an outcome to the 2014/15 accounts, which may have a knock-on effect on later years' accounts. However, the Council's officers and he were very hopeful of getting the accounts back on track, with the accounts for 2018/19 already under preparation and targeted for submission to Council before the 30 June 2019 deadline. He continued, that:

- his report (which he outlined in detail) followed the format of the questions asked on the Annual Return
- the Council's financial management arrangements in 2016/17 (the first year he had audited) had been totally inadequate
- there was significant evidence of the Council getting back on track since then
- there was a lot of good work going on, with officers working hard to improve the Council's financial management arrangements and effectiveness
- the Council was now in the best shape it had been in for very many years, with major steps forward in many areas
- whilst significant improvements had been made, further improvements were also necessary e.g. there was little evidence of a risk-based approach at ALCC, the asset register (whilst it was maintained accurately) nevertheless needed to be reviewed and formal bank reconciliations should be done more frequently
- he thanked the officers for their hard work and co-operation with the audit.

The Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer thanked the Deputy Clerk and the Internal Auditor for all their hard work and input on the Council's accounts and finances.

Members commented:

- thanking the Clerk and Deputy Clerk for their hard work
- ALCC had gone from a total mess to a well-run Council in a relatively short time
- there was no comparison between the situation in 2015 and now
- the Council's two officers were doing an excellent job.

Council RESOLVED:

- (1) that the Council agrees that the accounting statements shown in the report fairly present the financial position of the Council for the year ending 31 March 2018
- (2) that the Annual Return, including the Annual Governance Statement and the Internal Auditor's report, along with the attachments to this report, be approved for submission to the Wales Audit Office
- (3) that the Council authorises the Clerk/RFO and the Chair of the Council to complete and sign the Annual Return on the basis of these accounts and
- (4) that the Council authorises the Clerk/RFO to submit the Annual Return for 2017/18 to the Wales Audit Office as required.

Hugh O'Sullivan left the meeting at this point.

272. FINANCE ORDER

The Clerk and the Deputy Clerk reported that:

- the balance of the current account included the annual precept, which recently came into the Council's bank
- the original bill from SSE of approx. £2,500 included £944 "arrears" as SSE had not received the cheque sent to them by ALCC in October 2018, as well as approx. £1,550 for the Christmas Lights 2018 power supplies
- that £1,550 bill had been reduced to £562, following investigation of the charges

- this reflected the fact that fewer lights had been provided over Christmas 2018
- the Clerk had spent a lot of time dealing with SSE but saved the Council over £1,000 as a result

A member reported that a number of crosses and wreaths had been discarded at the rear of the War Memorial site recently. The Clerk undertook to ask the contractor what had happened.

Council RESOLVED to note and approve the payments listed in the Finance Order and note the Council's current financial position.

273. APPLICATIONS FOR GRANTS OR ASSISTANCE AND GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

The Council considered the applications attached to the agenda and, following debate:

Council RESOLVED:

- (1) that officers gather further information on the request for funding towards Acid Attack Kits in Licensed Premises (e.g. which locations) and report back in due course
- (2) to grant £156 to the Friends of St Illtyd, to pay towards the costs of the St Illtyds Heritage Open Day
- (3) to grant £200 to the Bobath Children's Therapy Centre Wales, to help pay towards the costs of the work they do with children in the local area
- (4) to grant £250 to sponsor one of the Blaenau Gwent Volunteer Achievement Awards
- (5) that officers gather more information and let relevant members know in due course about the awards evening and ALCC's part in it, as well as ensuring ALCC's name is on the award it sponsors
- (6) to grant £200 to Abertillery Mini and Juniors RFC, to pay towards the costs of their community project.

274. REPORTS BACK AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM WORKING GROUPS

Councillor Gill Clark (Chair of the Christmas Lights Working Group) (CLWG) outlined the recommendations of the CLWG. Discussion ensued on local areas providing their own Christmas lights in future, with financial help from ALCC, on the budget for Christmas lights and on who should pay for the electricity for Christmas lights provided by others.

Councillor Dyson (Chair of the Leisure and Tourism Working Group) (L&TWG) outlined the report of that Working Group. The Party in the Park 2019 would be held on the cricket ground, Abertillery Park on Saturday 17 August 2019 from 12.00 noon to 7pm. There would also be activities that day on the bowls club and rugby pitch (a Rugby 7s tournament).

Councillor Lewis (Chair of the Shop Local Working Group) (SLWG) outlined the report and recommendations of the SLWG. A meeting would be held with shopkeepers next week, more posters were going out for shops to display, it was hoped Jubilee Square could be cleaned very soon and Council approval was needed to progress and fund the drone video project. It was suggested that the Chair of the SLWG speak to local bus operators about displaying shop local posters on buses.

Councillor Oakley (Chair of the Youth Engagement Working Group) (YEWG) reported that progress was being made by the YEWG but was being slowed by the absence of key youth services staff at Blaenau Gwent CBC. He hoped to report more progress at the June Council meeting. Councillor Holt stated that she would make further enquiries at BGCBC about the staffing situation.

Councillor Simmons (Chair of the Well-being Working Group) (WBWG) reported that progress was being made on five cross-cutting projects, with members leading on each and identifying what budgets would be needed. He had designed a leaflet for the ward projects, to go out to the public, and was waiting for it to be printed. Comments were made about the need to map the projects against the five well-being objectives and that ALCC was already doing a lot towards those objectives.

Council RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Council goes out to tender for the following Christmas lighting and the Proper Officers take all relevant steps to bring tenders back to Council for its June meeting to decide on the Christmas lighting for 2019. The tender to be based on the supply, installation and removal of:
 - a. **Church Street, from High Street junction to Division Street junction:** Christmas lighting and figurines
 - b. **Somerset Street up to the junction of King Street:**
 - i. 100m of LED Icicle lights to existing support wires
 - ii. LED Cross Street "Seasons Greeting" decoration
 - c. **St Michael's Church:** 4m tall commercial grade artificial tree, incorporating lighting for the tree.
 - d. **Abertillery Arcade:** Christmas Lighting within the arcade.
 - e. **Six Bells, Alexander Road:**
 - i. 100m of festoon lighting with LED coloured lamps
 - ii. 11 figurines to existing columns
 - f. **Warm Turn:** 4m tall commercial grade artificial tree, incorporating lighting for the tree.
 - g. **Cwmtillery Ty-Dan Y Wal:** LED coloured lights into existing Fir Tree
 - h. **Aberbeeg, Bus stop opposite Woodland Terrace:** 100m LED coloured lights into existing trees behind bus stop.
- (2) That the Council use the existing lights that are already installed at Bournville Road Residents Hall.
- (3) That the Council gives a grant of £3,000 (based on the 2018 costs) to Llanhilleth Tenants and Residents Association for them to arrange Christmas lighting for Commercial Street.
- (4) That the Council gives a grant of £1,500 to Swffryd Community Centre for the installation of a Christmas Tree and Lights.
- (5) That the Council gives a grant of £1,500 to Brynithel Community Centre for the installation of a Christmas Tree and Lights.
- (6) That the Council does NOT pay for Christmas lights electricity supplies for the areas which are providing their own Christmas lights in future.
- (7) That the Council notes the Party in the Park 2019 arrangements.

- (8) That the drone video project be progressed and the Council allocate £1,000 of its 2019/20 budget to fund this project.
- (9) To note the other progress reported.

275. SIX BELLS MINING MEMORIAL

The Clerk outlined the request (for receptacles for flowers at the above site) attached to the agenda. He explained that ALCC would need to maintain anything it provided into the future and that the site was not currently being maintained by ALCC.

Various members referred to:

- the works currently being undertaken at the site to repair the wall and road
- the large amount of anti-social behaviour, litter and vandalism around the site
- the fact that The Guardian was now the main site for remembrance of the Six Bells mining disaster
- the need to wait for the current works to be completed and for ALCC to take on the maintenance of the site, and possibly rededicate the memorial
- the local tenants and residents' association possibly maintaining the site
- who was responsible for the site?

Councillor Phillips reported and the Deputy Clerk confirmed that ALCC was responsible for the site. This had come to light some years ago and been confirmed last year by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council.

Council RESOLVED to receive a report back on what ALCC is responsible for at the site of the Six Bells Mining Memorial and reconsider this at the June Council meeting.

276. REPORTS BACK ON RELEVANT TRAINING OR MEETINGS ATTENDED

The Clerk reported that he and Councillors Glyn Smith and Gill Clark had attended a One Voice Wales Gwent Valleys Area Committee (GVAC) recently. The main speakers were representatives of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, discussing the PSOW's role. The GVAC also discussed members' allowances, which (it became clear recently) were taxable. Talks were taking place nationally between One Voice Wales, HMRC and others about changing the rules in future but, for now, members should be declaring the allowances they received for tax purposes and future years' members' allowances would have to be paid to members through the payroll system, for which ALCC would be charged an additional fee.

The Chair reported that she had attended a Blaenau Gwent Local Development Plan (LDP) Issues and Vision Workshop, with Councillor Adamson. This was a round table session, looking at what people wanted for the next LDP, which would be in force up until 2033. She had requested further details and would forward them on to all members in due course. There would be another information gathering workshop in July.

Councillor Gill Clark reported that she and Councillors Dyson and Bidgood had attended an "organising events" training session. Organising events was not easy; there were lots of issues to deal with and lots of agencies needed to be involved, particularly in respect of health and safety. Everything had to be risk assessed. Councillor Dyson stated that this

was important for ALCC and would impact on the work involved in Party in the Park, a Fun Run, and even a Record Fair. Event Safety Plans increasingly needed to be online.

Council RESOLVED to note the reports back.

277. ABERFEST

Councillor Phillips reported on the preparations for Aberfest, which would be held on Saturday 15 June 2019 at 11am to 5pm. There would be several areas containing lots of different activities including:

- Health Centre Car Park – Classic Car and Bus Show organised by the Rotary Club, along with Fairground
- Church Street – trade and craft stalls
- Jubilee Square gates – musical entertainment and martial arts demonstration
- The Arcade – craft stalls
- Museum Car Park – children’s games and picnic chairs and tables
- In the Museum – activities, toilets, lost children base and First Aid
- Fancy Dress (theme: films) Walking Parade from the War Memorial, Somerset Street to Church Street starting at 12.30pm.

Councillor Phillips asked that ALCC help out with the printing of leaflets and “car park closed” signs. He also asked all councillors to volunteer to help on the day, e.g. setting up gazebos and stalls and stated that everyone was welcome to attend Ffrindiau Tyleri meetings (the next one was on 20 May at 7pm at Ebenezer Church).

The Deputy Clerk reported that the John Selway plaque would be placed near the Jubilee Square gates and unveiled on Aberfest day at approximately 12.00 noon.

Council RESOLVED to note the updates and provide help with printing leaflets and “car park closed” signs.

278. CHAIR’S ANNOUNCEMENTS, OTHER RELEVANT CORRESPONDENCE AND CELEBRATING SUCCESS

The Clerk and/or the Chair reported on:

- the resignation of Councillor Beverley Lucas on 7 May 2019; a Notice of Vacancy was out now, with a deadline of 31 May for ten electors to call for an election
- the article in the May 2019 *Abertillery and Ebbw Valleys Dynamic* newspaper about the rise in ALCC’s precept, which had been inaccurate and critical of the Community Council; the Chair and the Clerk had met the Editor to discuss the article and seek corrections and an apology in the next edition of *The Dynamic*
- the invitation to the Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent to attend an ALCC Council meeting; he was not available for the May, June or July meetings but would be available if the July meeting moved to 31 July - this could be dealt with at the annual meeting later this evening
- an email had been sent out to all members recently about the future of The Met
- the quarterly liaison meetings between Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council and the town and community councils in the area; these were being reinvigorated

and rotated around the various council offices in future

- the request to hold the next quarterly liaison meeting (planned for 12 June 2019) in the ALCC Council Chamber.

Other members reported on the recent success of Abertillery Youth RFC, who had won the Dragons Youth Plate Cup Final recently and suggested a letter of thanks to PC Andy Davies for his service to the area.

Council RESOLVED:

- (1) to note the updates
- (2) to agree to hold the next quarterly joint liaison meeting (planned for 12 June) in ALCC's Council Chamber
- (3) to write with the Council's congratulations to Abertillery Youth RFC, who had won the Dragons Youth Plate Cup Final recently, and announce their success on the website
- (4) to send PC Andy Davies a formal letter of thanks for his service to the area.

279. RESOLUTION TO EXCLUDE THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Council RESOLVED to exclude the press and public from the meeting for the following item of business, by virtue of The Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, on the grounds that disclosure of the matters to be discussed would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of those matters.

280. CHRISTMAS LIGHTS

The Clerk reported that the letter sent in March to the Council's former contractor, seeking removal of the remaining Christmas lights, had not been received by the former contractor. Several attempts had been made to deliver it, by the Post Office, who were now returning the letter to ALCC. The Christmas lights had been taken down by another contractor, for which ALCC had paid £720. It was very unlikely in the current circumstances that those costs could be recovered from the former contractor.

Council RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Council does not waste further resources attempting to recover the costs of removing the Christmas lights from the former contractor
- (2) That the Christmas lights now held in storage by ALCC be tested to see if they work and, if not, they be disposed of
- (3) That legal advice be sought on the disposal or retention and ongoing ownership of those lights.

The meeting ended at 8.35pm.

Signed as a correct record by the Chair

NB these minutes are a summary of the proceedings and record of the decisions taken. They are not intended to be a verbatim record.

Minutes produced by Richard Gwinnell, Town Clerk