

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF ABERTILLERY AND LLANHILLETH COMMUNITY
COUNCIL (ALCC) HELD ON 17 APRIL 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, Beverley Lucas, Gary Oakley, Nick Simmons, Glyn Smith, Bernard Wall, Graham White and Trudy Williams

Officers: Steve Edwards, Deputy Clerk and Richard Gwinnell, Town Clerk

Others: None

ABSENT: Councillors Perry Morgan, Rob Phillips and Allen Rees

The Council meeting was preceded by a presentation from Rafi Abbas, of the Men's Den.

247. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Rob Phillips and Allen Rees.

248. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Peter Adamson declared a personal interest in the motion he had submitted (under agenda item 9) regarding nuclear waste dumping, as he was a member of CND (the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament). No other interests were declared.

249. MINUTES – COUNCIL – 4 MARCH 2019

Council RESOLVED that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 4 March 2019 be confirmed as a correct record, for signature by the Chair.

250. MINUTES – COUNCIL – 27 MARCH 2019

Council RESOLVED that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 27 March 2019 be confirmed as a correct record, for signature by the Chair.

251. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

There were no public questions for this meeting.

252. COUNCIL ACTION LIST

Councillor Wall entered the meeting at this point.

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

253. POLICE REPORT

The Clerk circulated copies of a written report received on 17 April from PC Davies of the Abertillery Police Neighbourhood Team. A copy is available on request.

Comments were made about the reduction in anti-social behaviour, the number of sheep on the roads and a problem with parking on Roseheyworth Hill. Members were reminded that they should report issues to the Police, when they occurred, and that Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council were due to take over parking enforcement from June, albeit with limited resources.

Council RESOLVED to note the report.

254. FINANCE ORDER

The Clerk and Deputy Clerk reported that:

- the monthly bank statement had not been received when this finance order was written, as this meeting was earlier in the month than normal
- the cheque for £944.70 to SSE (for the power supply for Christmas lighting in 2017) had been sent in October but had not yet been cashed by SSE
- the bill for 2018 from SSE (of £2,497.26) included the “outstanding” £944.70
- the bill for 2018 from SSE was being queried in any case, as less Christmas lights had been erected in 2018 but the number of units charged for had risen.

It was pointed out that the grant of £100 (cheque number 7479) was to the Llanhilleth Knit and Natter Group (to differentiate it from the Abertillery Knit and Natter Group).

Council RESOLVED to note and approve the payments listed in the Finance Order, with the above caveats and clarifications.

255. BUDGET 2018/19: YEAR END OUT-TURN

The Council considered the report of the Clerk and Deputy Clerk, which showed all the spending which took place in the 2018/19 year (which ended on 31 March 2019). The Deputy Clerk briefly outlined the report.

The Chair asked Councillor White to explain the two lengthy papers he had delivered to the office on the afternoon of this meeting. Copies were circulated around the room, on request. Councillor White stated that he had given the papers to the Deputy Clerk for consideration and reply. He objected to the Council increasing its budget and precept, given the underspend detailed in the report. He also objected to the fact that accounts had not been done on time and that this may again cost the Council dear, as it had in 2014/15, when the Wales Audit Office found the Council wanting.

Officers stated that this was an end of year budget report, not the annual accounts. They reminded members that the accounts for 2014/15 had not yet been signed off by the Wales Audit Office (WAO), due to a Police investigation of issues which occurred during 2014/15, and that no further years' accounts could therefore be signed off. The WAO had received all the ALCC accounts up to and including 2016/17 and it was hoped that

the 2017/18 and 2018/19 accounts would be finalised by the end of June 2019. All the accounts would be qualified by the Auditor General for Wales, because they were late. It had been difficult to go back in time and re-state or prepare accounts for years gone by, before the current staff arrived at the Council, but officers were confident that the accounts were now nearly up to date, from the Council's point of view. What the WAO did with the accounts, and when, was beyond the Council's control. Officers had discussed the timescales with the WAO and chased progress many times.

Councillor Oakley stated that he had been told by the WAO that they had received all the accounts necessary from ALCC, up to and including the 2016/17 accounts. The WAO were fully aware of the issues and they (the WAO) had said the delays were due to them, not to ALCC. He commented that the documents submitted by Councillor White were inaccurate in a number of respects and that he would have proposed the same budget increase, even if the underspend was known about in January.

Councillor White stated that he withdrew the documents he had submitted.

Comments were made about Councillor White's employment of an accountant to look at ALCC's budget report and the amount of information which had clearly been made available to the accountant about the Council. Members queried whether there was a breach of confidentiality involved. Councillor White stated that all the information was obtained from the Council's minutes and reports, on its website.

In response to another query, the Clerk reiterated that there was an underspend of approx. £24k on budgeted items, but an overspend of approx. £27k on non-budgeted items which the Council had decided to fund in 2018/19. The Council had taken money from reserves during the year, which should be replaced. When the new budget was set in January 2019, the Council did not know the year-end position, as the financial year did not end until 31 March. It could not take account of an underspend in January, when that underspend had not yet materialised.

Council RESOLVED to note the report.

256. MOTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

Councillor Adamson explained that the Westminster government was looking for a Welsh community to volunteer to host an underground nuclear waste dump, officially known as a Geological Disposal Facility, in return for financial reward. He moved the motion he had submitted and:

Council RESOLVED:

- (1) That this Council - Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council – wishes to make known to the Welsh and Westminster Governments their objection to any plans for their catchment area and the wider Blaenau Gwent area becoming a site for a nuclear waste Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) as outlined in plans published by Radioactive Waste Management on the 19th December 2018. We agree with the Nuclear Free Local Authorities (NFLA) Radioactive Waste Policy Briefing no. 76, that the safest approach to the storage of nuclear waste is not to bury it, but to keep it near the surface of the ground where it is easily monitored and can be repackaged

- if necessary, and the need for transporting it over long distances is minimal.
- (2) We also wish to register a particular objection to legislation – in areas with two tiers of local government, such as our own – that seeks to prevent any one council from vetoing discussions on hosting a GDF.

Councillor Oakley explained and moved his motion, for the Council to buy another two defibrillators, one cabinet and ten signs and for one of the defibrillators to be sited at Warm Turn and the other to be used as a spare or for outside events.

In answer to queries, the Deputy Clerk explained that the defibrillators would be sited at the:

- Mitre Street Council office, Abertillery
- Bridge Street Health Centre, Abertillery
- Territorial Reserves Base, Somerset Street, Abertillery
- St Paul's Church Hall, Cwmtillery
- Pen-y-Bont Care Home, Blaenau Gwent
- Ty Ebbw Fach, Six Bells
- NISA shop, Sofrydd
- Bourneville Social Hall and Institute, Bourneville Road
- Llanhilleth Institute.

Discussion ensued on the need for publicity when the defibrillators were rolled out and the location of a defibrillator at the Llanhilleth Institute, which may not be necessary as a nearby shop was understood to be installing their defibrillator on their external wall in the near future. Some members considered that another site in Llanhilleth e.g. the Top Hotel would therefore be a better site for the ALCC defib.

Council RESOLVED:

- (3) That the Council purchases and installs a further one defibrillator and cabinet at Warm Turn (exact location to be determined)
- (4) That the Council purchases a further one defibrillator (without cabinet) to keep in the office, as a spare and for mobile use, including at ALCC events
- (5) That the Council purchases 10 AED 3D "Defibrillator" projecting signs (35x20cm) and installs one at each ALCC sponsored defibrillator location
- (6) That the Council sets aside £3,600 of its 2019/20 budget for this purpose
- (7) That the Council delegates all necessary powers to its officers, to complete this project
- (8) That the location of the defibrillator in Llanhilleth (currently planned for the Llanhilleth Institute building) be placed on hold, pending further clarification of the location of other defibrillator(s) in Llanhilleth.

257. BUDGET 2019/20: WORKING GROUP PROPOSALS

Councillor Lewis presented the recommendations of the Shop Local Working Group. These were circulated around the room. A copy is available on request.

The Clerk explained that there was no need for the Council to approve a budget of £25 for posters, as the Council had previously set aside £500 for shop local initiatives and

that fund had not yet been exhausted.

Councillor Dyson presented the recommendations of the Leisure and Tourism Working Group. These were circulated around the room. A copy is available on request. She urged Council to agree a budget for a 2019 Party in the Park as soon as possible so that discussions on a date, time and location could be held, acts could be booked and deposits could be paid. If a substantial budget was not agreed, deposits could not be paid, as there was a risk that the funds may not be made available at a later date.

Lengthy discussion ensued on the potential costs and components of a Party in the Park 2019, the hundreds of hours needed to organise an event and the need for a more detailed breakdown of the funding required. It was reported that September would not be good for a Rugby 7s tournament, as the rugby season started in August. Members made various suggestions relating to funding and performers for Party in the Park 2019.

Council adjourned for 5 minutes whilst a breakdown of the spending on the WW1 Party in the Park 2018 was obtained and circulated. A copy is available on request.

Further discussion also ensued on:

- the proposed Fun Run and the proposed budget, whether people should pay for entry, whether proceeds should go to charity (and if so, which charity) and what would be needed in terms of health and safety, road closures, water stations, publicity, banners etc; the Leisure and Tourism Working Group needed to do further work on that and bring recommendations back to Council
- what the money proposed for the Abertillery Knit and Natter Group was for (materials)
- proposed additions to the membership of working groups
- the progress being made by the Youth Engagement Working Group, which had met twice and met with reps from Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council and elsewhere, with a report back likely to the May Council meeting.

Council RESOLVED:

- (1) to appoint Councillor Amanda Edwards to serve on the Shop Local Working Group, alongside existing members of that group
- (2) to allocate up to £10,000 of the 2019/20 budget to pay for a Party in the Park 2019
- (3) to delegate all necessary powers to the Council's officers, to ensure delivery of the 2019 Party in the Park
- (4) not to allocate any funding for a Fun Run, but to receive further recommendations from the working group in due course on the components and costs of a Fun Run
- (5) to allocate £250 of the 2019/20 budget to pay for a grant to the Abertillery Knit and Natter Group
- (6) to appoint Councillor Amanda Edwards to serve on the Youth Engagement Working Group, alongside existing members of that group
- (7) to appoint Councillor Gary Oakley to serve on the Leisure and Tourism Working Group, alongside existing members of that group.

The Clerk pointed out that the Council had decided, at this meeting, to spend £13,850 of the 2019/20 budget. The amount remaining unallocated was now therefore £64,750.

258. SOLAR FARM GRANT 2018 UPDATE

The Clerk reported that £35,000 had been received from the solar farm company on 9 April 2019. Preparations were being made to give a cheque to Abertillery Excelsiors AFC as soon as possible, as previously decided by the Council.

Council RESOLVED to note progress.

259. REPORTS BACK ON RELEVANT TRAINING OR MEETINGS ATTENDED

The Chair reported that she and the Vice Chair had attended a meeting called by the Leader of Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council to discuss the future of The Met. There had been rumours that The Met was due to close down, but this was not the case. BGCBC however was seeking ideas and looking at options for the future of The Met, as it was unsustainable in its current form and running a theatre was not a statutory duty for BGCBC.

The Deputy Clerk reported that he had attended a meeting with BGCBC staff and other town and community council Clerks on 16 April. This was to discuss the Charter as well as communicating better generally. Everyone was keen that liaison between BGCBC and town and community councils improved, and BGCBC was keen that meetings focussed more on strategic (e.g. well-being) rather than parochial or short-term issues.

Councillor Dyson reported that she had attended an Armed Forces Covenant Steering Group on 15 April. There would be an Armed Forces Day event at Bedwellty Park on 30 June, a Gwent Armed Forces recruitment event on 12 September and a Reservists Day for BGCBC employees on 26 June. The Armed Forces Covenant grant fund opened on 1 June and closed in August. There was also discussion of an Armed Forces Discount Day or Armed Forces Discount Card, for use in local shops.

Councillor Smith reported that he had recently attended the One Voice Wales Larger Local Councils Committee. The WAO had made clear that it would be taking all town and community council audit work back in house (and no longer using private firms) and that in future, most T&CCs could expect one full audit every fifth year, with "light touch" audits for each of the intervening four years. The Data Protection Officer from Cardiff had made clear the importance of data being handled properly, data being destroyed when it was no longer required and councillors not revealing sensitive information, at risk of prosecution. There was also discussion of the need to get more young people involved in Council meetings or as young councillors.

The Clerk reported that he and the Deputy Clerk were holding meetings this week and over the next few weeks with the Internal Auditor about the 2017/18 and 2018/19 accounts. Work was well advanced and it was hoped to submit the 2017/18 accounts to Council in May and the 2018/19 accounts in June.

The Chair thanked the staff for the significant amount of work they had done already and continued to do, to get the Council's backlog of accounts cleared.

Council RESOLVED to note the reports back.

260. SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 3(x)

Council RESOLVED to suspend standing order 3(x) to extend the meeting for longer than two hours.

261. COUNCILLOR VACANCY UPDATE

The Clerk reported that no applications had been received by the 8 April deadline for the vacant seat for a councillor in Aberbeeg.

Council **RESOLVED** to advertise again for the vacancy, with no deadline, and consider any applications if and when they arrived.

262. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS, OTHER RELEVANT CORRESPONDENCE AND CELEBRATING SUCCESS

A member referred to the story in the Daily Mail about the BGCBC Managing Director's salary. The Chair stated that the story was not true and the BGCBC Communications Team was in the process of trying to put the record straight. The Chair was asked to keep members updated.

Councillor Roger Clark reported on and:

Council RESOLVED to write with the Council's congratulations to Abertillery Bluebirds FC, who had become champions of Gwent County Division 1 and gained promotion to the Welsh League in the last few weeks; and announce their success on the website.

263. 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.

264. CHRISTMAS LIGHTS

The Clerk informed members that a letter had been sent on 29 March, special delivery, to the Council's former contractor, seeking removal of the remaining Christmas lights by 19 April. Blaenau Gwent CBC Street Lighting had said they were unable to help with removing the Christmas lights. An invitation to tender had also been issued so that, if the lights were not removed by 19 April (by the Council's former contractor), another company could be employed to remove them as soon as possible thereafter. This was in line with the legal advice obtained and reported previously and in line with previous Council decisions.

Discussion ensued on going out to tender again for new lights for 2019 and beyond. The Clerk explained that the Council needed to decide first, where it wanted lights and what lights it wanted, before an invitation to tender could be issued.

Members reported that people in Six Bells still wanted ALCC to provide Christmas lights there. A recent meeting in Aberbeeg was only attended by three people, so there was no conclusion to discussions there.

Council RESOLVED:

- (1) That members need to feed back responses from local groups about the provision of Christmas lights in future in their areas by 24 April 2019
- (2) That the Christmas Lights Working Group meet on 26 April 2019 at 10am, discuss going out to tender for future Christmas lights further and make recommendations to the Council at its next meeting.

The meeting ended at 9.25pm.

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, Clerk