

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF ABERTILLERY AND LLANHILLETH COMMUNITY
COUNCIL (ALCC) HELD ON 20 FEBRUARY 2019 at 7.00pm
in the Council Chamber, Mitre Street, Abertillery**

PRESENT: Councillors:

Keri Bidgood, Gill Clark, Roger Clark, Tracey Dyson, Julie Holt (Chair) (in the Chair), Mark Lewis, Rob Phillips and Nick Simmons

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

ABSENT: Councillors Peter Adamson, Gary Oakley, Perry Morgan, Allen Rees, Glyn Smith, Bernard Wall, Graham White and Trudy Williams

196. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND WELCOMES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Adamson, Oakley, Rees, Wall and Williams.

197. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No members declared any personal or prejudicial interests.

198. MINUTES – COUNCIL – 16 JANUARY 2019 and 30 JANUARY 2019

Council RESOLVED:

- (1) that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 16 January 2019 be confirmed as a correct record, for signature by the Chair, subject to the addition of the word “not” between the words “could” and “support” in paragraph three on page six (minute number 179) and
- (2) that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 30 January 2019 be confirmed as a correct record, for signature by the Chair.

199. MINUTES – HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 10 DECEMBER 2018

The members of the Human Resources Committee confirmed that the minutes were a correct record of the meeting.

Council RESOLVED that the minutes of the Human Resources Committee meeting held on 10 December 2018 be confirmed as a correct record, for signature by the Chair, and their contents be noted.

200. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

There were no public questions for this meeting.

201. COUNCIL ACTION LIST

Questions were asked and replies were given about progress with the blue plaque for John Selway, the cleaning of the Abertillery war memorial, the Jubilee Square gates, the roll-out to all members of ALCC emails and why one member was still not using an ALCC email account, when it appeared from email evidence that he could access it.

Discussion ensued on the need for better maintenance of Jubilee Square, for cleaning of the steps and slabs and for better control of access (e.g. barbed wire to prevent people climbing over the gates and vandalism). Whether ALCC could have a key to open the gates for special events and community use, as well as who was responsible for Jubilee Square, was also questioned. The Chair stated that she would raise these queries with Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (of which she was a member) and report back in due course.

Council RESOLVED:

- (1) to note the updates shown in the action sheet
- (2) to write a letter of thanks to Daniel Edwards of Lawrence Memorial Masons, for the work he did (free of charge) to clean the Abertillery War Memorial
- (3) to receive a report back from the Chair on Jubilee Square access and cleaning.

202. PROJECTS AND PARTNERSHIPS WORKING GROUP (P&PWG) REPORT BACK

Councillor Gill Clark (Chair of the P&PWG) circulated notes of the Working Group meeting held on 18 February 2019. A copy is available on request. She had spoken with the Clerk since that meeting and it was clear the Council needed to decide, which organisation the solar farm grant should be paid to, pending the establishment of the proposed Cwmtillery Partnership, to avoid the risk of losing the funding due to the delay. Councillor Gill Clark proposed that the grant be paid to Abertillery Excelsiors FC, pending the establishment of the Cwmtillery Partnership.

Discussion ensued on how the £35k would be spent. The notes of the P&PWG spelt out what was proposed and what that would cost. It was suggested and agreed by members that the shortfall of approx. £3,000 would be required as contingency funding. It was also made clear that Coetir Tyleri were not asking for funding at this stage (so the £15k listed for cabins, composting toilets etc was excluded from this £35k grant request).

Members discussed the proposal for two councillors to be on the new partnership when it was formed. It was considered important that these should be Cwmtillery councillors.

Council RESOLVED:

- (1) that the Solar Farm grant of £35,000 be allocated to deliver the plans listed and costed in the notes of the P&PWG held on 18 February 2019
- (2) that all the organisations involved in delivery of the proposals work together to link up the various elements of the project
- (3) that the organisations involved form an over-arching group ("the Cwmtillery Partnership"), with officers in place who are able to drive the project forward
- (4) that the new partnership be responsible for providing evidence of exactly how the

- money has been spent and the impact it has
- (5) that Councillors Roger Clark and Mark Lewis be nominated to represent ALCC on the new Cwmtillery Partnership, when it is established
 - (6) that the grant be paid to Abertillery Excelsiors FC, and Abertillery Excelsiors FC manage the funding and delivery of the project, pending the establishment of the new Cwmtillery Partnership.

203. VACANCIES FOR COUNCILLORS

The Clerk circulated two applications for the Abertillery vacancy, from Amanda Edwards and Beverley Lucas. He explained that:

- Councillor Steve Bard (Six Bells) had resigned on 16 January 2019
- Councillor Ivor Beynon (Aberbeeg) had resigned on 15 January 2019
- it was traditional to write letters of thanks to former councillors
- the deadlines had passed for ten electors to ask for elections in the Six Bells and Aberbeeg wards and no such requests for elections had been made
- the Council therefore needed to co-opt councillors for those wards as soon as possible
- two applications had been received for the Abertillery vacancy
- both applicants had indicated that they preferred to serve the Abertillery ward but were happy to serve other wards if necessary
- Amanda Edwards' application had been received first
- any vacant seats remaining would need to be re-advertised.

Council RESOLVED:

- (1) to write letters of thanks to former Councillors Bard and Beynon
- (2) to appoint Amanda Edwards as a co-opted councillor for the Abertillery ward
- (3) to appoint Beverley Lucas as a co-opted councillor for the Six Bells ward
- (4) to advertise the remaining vacancy for the Aberbeeg ward.

204. FINANCE ORDER

The Deputy Clerk pointed out that the cheque to Commercial Christmas for £4,989.60 (25% payment) had not been sent, as decided by the Council in December and again in January. That cheque had now been cancelled.

Council RESOLVED to approve the payments listed in the Finance Order, with the exception of the cheque for £4,989.60 to Commercial Christmas.

205. APPLICATIONS FOR GRANTS OR ASSISTANCE AND GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

The Clerk explained that Tillery Dragons had asked, in a recent email, for £200.

Council RESOLVED:

- (1) to grant £100 to the Knit and Natter Club, Llanhilleth, to help towards the costs of purchasing wool, to make garments and blankets for charities for premature babies, homeless people and animals, as well as other local clubs/charities/causes

(2) to grant £200 to Tillery Dragons Netball, to help towards the costs of a trip for 35 local girls to represent Abertillery at a netball festival in October in Paris.

206. ST. DAVID'S DAY CONCERT

The Chair gave an update on preparations for the St. David's Day concert, which would be held on Friday 1 March at 7.30pm at St Michael's Church, Abertillery. Several local choirs and bands were performing. Abertillery Learning Community were unable to send a choir, as it was half term and Abertillery Youth Drama and Music Society were unable to perform, as they had reached their number of performances limit. Programmes were being produced as usual and members were asked to act as volunteers on the night, selling programmes, arranging chairs etc. A member asked whether Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg could be asked to perform. The Chair welcomed this, as long as the request and response were swift.

Council RESOLVED to note the update.

207. DEFIBRILLATORS

The Deputy Clerk updated Council on the purchase of the defibrillators previously decided by Council. The defibrillators and cabinets had arrived, but unfortunately the wrong cabinets had been supplied. The correct cabinets were on order. Reaching agreement with the owners of the nine sites where the defibrillators would be installed was nearing completion. Three quotes from electrical installers had also been received and the successful contractor would be selected when the correct cabinets arrived, on the basis of cost, experience and local labour. Installation and advertising would follow shortly after. The Council did not need to decide on the quotes, as the amount involved was below the limits in the Council's Standing Orders.

Council RESOLVED to note the update.

208. THE COUNCIL'S STANDING ORDERS

The Clerk outlined his report and circulated the new model standing orders proposed by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) and issued by One Voice Wales (OVW) in June 2018, with changes to reflect local variations (additions and deletions) as decided on previously by the Council, e.g. in respect of public questions at meetings, time limits for meetings, motions and speaking, the process for dealing with planning applications, the ALCC committee structure and so on. The changes from the model were tracked, so that any additions or deletions stood out and were on record. A copy of the tracked-changes version is available on request.

The Clerk outlined the new model and all the changes in detail. He also outlined the options open to Council to amend the model standing orders (e.g. in respect of section 24 of the NALC model). The Clerk suggested that members take away the tracked-changes version and consider it further, and that it be sent to all other members, who were absent from the meeting today, and that the proposed new standing orders be re-submitted to a future Council meeting for final adoption.

Members asked questions and agreed on various options (e.g. to remove section 24 of the NALC model). Members stated that they were happy that they had considered the standing orders and options sufficiently, to enable them to adopt them today.

Council RESOLVED to adopt the new model standing orders, with the changes outlined by the Clerk and shown in the tracked-changes version, and to issue the resulting new standing orders for Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council to all members as soon as possible.

209. REPORTS BACK ON RELEVANT TRAINING OR MEETINGS ATTENDED

Councillor Simmons reported back on the consultative meeting held on 5 February 2019 between Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (BGCBC) and the town and community councils (T&CCs) in the area, and the pre-meeting with other T&CC reps. There was an issue with the number of attendees (some T&CCs sent two reps, some sent more), discussion on the BGCBC budget and discussion on the Charter between BGCBC and the T&CCs, which needed to be reviewed, as it was not working effectively. A workshop to discuss the Charter further would be held on 27 February and he would be attending that, along with ALCC's other representative (Councillor Wall or a named substitute) and the Deputy Clerk.

Councillor Dyson reported that she had attended the Blaenau Gwent Armed Forces Covenant Steering Group, which was busy working to better the lives of former military service men, women and families. Any group could make a grant application to The Covenant Steering Group, for funding for relevant activities or events (e.g. a military display at a community event such as Aberfest).

Councillor Simmons stated that he had proposed the vacant site next to Tesco (Castle Street) as a candidate site for an out of town retail and leisure park, as part of the new Blaenau Gwent Local Development Plan, which was under development. This was a personal submission, not on behalf of the Council. BGCBC had responded positively, that they were considering his proposal.

The Clerk reported back on the One Voice Wales Larger Local Councils Committee, which he had attended on 6 February. The key speakers were representatives of the Wales Audit Office (WAO), talking about their reports "Financial Management and Governance: Town and Community Councils 2017-18" and "Internal Audit Arrangements at Town and Community Councils in Wales". These were available for anyone to see on the WAO website. The Clerk outlined key messages from the WAO presentation, as circulated to all ALCC members by email previously.

Council RESOLVED to note the reports back.

210. ANNUAL HONORARIUMS

The Clerk stated that the Council had, for many years, granted an honorarium of £40 to the driver of the vehicle which pulled Santa's sleigh at Winterfest and £75 to the caretaker of the Mitre Street building, in recognition of the services they gave the Council in the year gone by.

Council **RESOLVED** to grant honorariums of £40 to the driver of the vehicle which pulled Santa's sleigh at Winterfest and £75 to the caretaker of the Mitre Street building, in recognition of the services they gave the Council in 2018.

211. ONE VOICE WALES MEMBERSHIP 2019/20

Council **RESOLVED** to renew its membership of One Voice Wales for the year ahead, at a cost of £2,497.00.

212. COUNCIL MEETING DATES

Council **RESOLVED**, in light of forthcoming bank holiday/school holiday dates and the amount of business to be dealt with, to amend the meeting dates and times agreed on 7 June 2018 as follows:

- 4 March 2019 at 7pm – extra meeting - with BGCBC representatives
- 27 March 2019 at 7pm – ordinary meeting – as originally scheduled
- 17 April 2019 at 7pm – ordinary meeting – changed from accounts and budget issues only to deal also with any other relevant ordinary Council business items
- 24 April 2019 at 7pm – ordinary meeting – cancelled
- 15 May 2019 at 7pm – additional meeting for ordinary Council business (short agenda) followed immediately by
- 15 May 2019, immediately after the ordinary meeting, annual Council meeting.

The Clerk reported that the following meeting would ordinarily be on the last Wednesday in June, if Council on 15 May agreed to follow its traditional meeting times pattern.

213. PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS

The Deputy Clerk reported that free samples of promotional materials such as pens, key rings or diaries, with ALCC's name printed on them, were regularly received from companies, seeking to sell more of the same to the Council, so that it could promote ALCC. He asked if the Council wished to invest in buying such promotional materials (e.g. 150 pens for £69), for future events or marketing purposes.

Members supported the use of pop-up banners, promoting ALCC and its services at future events, but not promotional give-away materials such as pens, diaries etc.

Council **RESOLVED** NOT to purchase such materials.

214. IMPROVING SUSTAINABILITY – REDUCING PRINTING

The Chair referred to the amount of paper and printing required if all members continued to have paper copies of agendas for meetings. She suggested that most people could now read agendas, minutes and reports on screen and that printing be reduced to a minimum, including stopping the printing of appendices to reports. As Chair, she needed a paper copy to write notes on, during meetings. Others may not need paper copies.

Other members suggested that:

- papers only be printed out if a member individually requested a paper copy
- the Council explore the use of tablets for members instead of papers
- tablets could possibly be linked to the TV monitor already agreed by Council
- the TV screen agreed previously would not be used very often and was not an effective solution; it would be a waste of public money
- everyone should be mindful of the costs of paper and printing and the Council should be as paperless as possible.

The Deputy Clerk pointed out that the budget agreed on 16 January did not include a TV monitor. The Clerk advised that investing in a TV screen and/or tablets would have to be discussed, along with any other budget priorities, by the Projects and Partnerships Working Group and recommended back to Council as part of the budget in due course.

Council RESOLVED to cut down on physical printing wherever possible in future.

215. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS AND OTHER RELEVANT CORRESPONDENCE

The Chair announced that she had received tickets for the Nantyglo and Blaina Town Mayor's Concert on 5 March, but she could not attend. Nor could the Vice Chair.

Council RESOLVED to extend the invitation to all members.

216. CELEBRATING LOCAL SUCCESS

Council RESOLVED to write to the Friends of Six Bells Park, congratulating them on their success with the new kiosk and wishing them success with their Easter events, and announce their success on the ALCC website.

217. RESOLUTION TO EXCLUDE THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Council RESOLVED to exclude the press and public from the meeting for the following items 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.

218. APPOINTMENT OF INTERNAL AUDITOR

The Deputy Clerk reported that:

- the Council had already appointed Hugh O'Sullivan as its Internal Auditor for 2016/17 and 2017/18
- an advert had been placed on the Council's website and on the One Voice Wales website for an Internal Auditor for ALCC for the next three years (and possibly up to two further years), as previously agreed by Council
- two responses had been received
- one company had quoted for one year, a rate calculated on the basis of 1.5 days' work; this may be an underestimate of the work required, given past experience
- Mr O'Sullivan had quoted the same £50 hourly rate plus mileage as he had charged previously
- officers and the Council had already worked for over a year with Mr O'Sullivan,

so he knew the history of ALCC and the audit background in detail

- the Council had already received a professional and valuable service from, and had an established working relationship with, Mr O'Sullivan
- officers therefore recommended the Council to appoint Hugh O'Sullivan.

Council RESOLVED:

- (1) to appoint Hugh O'Sullivan as its Internal Auditor for 2018/19, 2019/20 and 2020/21, with the possibility of an extension for up to a further two years, at a rate of £50 per hour plus mileage, as quoted
- (2) to delegate authority to officers to finalise the details of the engagement process.

219. CHRISTMAS LIGHTS PROVISION

The Clerk circulated copies of the notes of the Christmas Lights Working Group held on 4 February 2019. A copy is available on request. He informed members that he had written to the Council's contractor, ending the contract, and asking for the remaining lights to be removed. Payment of the 50% outstanding had not been made, in line with previous Council decisions.

Discussion ensued on the fact that some Christmas lights were still up and whether action should be taken to remove them, and when. It was suggested that the Council proceed with caution and possibly remove the old lights when new lights were put up, if they were not taken down in the meantime.

Discussion also ensued on re-tendering and the need to decide what lights the Council wanted in future, due to the rising costs and vastly differing quotes received in 2017. It was stated that several areas (Llanhilleth, Soffryd and Brynithel) were already deciding to do their own light displays and that other outlying areas may want to do so too. This would enable ALCC to focus its future spending on a better display in the principal town of Abertillery. It was also suggested that Christmas trees with lights may be better and possibly cheaper than street-hanging or lamp-post hung lights.

Following various suggestions:

Council RESOLVED that members of the Christmas Lights Working Group and Shop Local Working Group and local ward members continue discussions with local groups, tenants and residents' associations and shopkeepers on whether they would be interested in providing and funding their own Christmas lighting displays in future.

The meeting ended at 9.00pm.

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