MINUTES OF A MEETING OF ABERTILLERY AND LLANHILLETH COMMUNITY COUNCIL (A&LCC) HELD ON 25 JULY 2018 at 7.00pm in the Council Chamber, Mitre Street, Abertillery

PRESENT: Councillors:

Peter Adamson, Steve Bard, Ivor Beynon, Keri Bidgood, Gill Clark (Vice Chair) (in the Chair), Roger Clark, Tracey Dyson, Mark Lewis, Rob Phillips, Nick Simmons, Glyn Smith, Bernard Wall, Graham White and Trudy Williams

Officers: Stephen Edwards, Deputy Clerk and Richard Gwinnell, Clerk

Others: None

ABSENT: Councillors Julie Holt (Chair), Ross Leadbeater, Perry Morgan and Allen Rees

37. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND WELCOMES

Apologies were received from Councillors Julie Holt, Perry Morgan and Allen Rees.

38. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following personal interests were declared (later in the meeting, when the relevant items arose):

Councillor	Agenda Item	Minute no.	Type of interest	Reason for interest
Roger Clark	15: Grant applications	51	Personal and prejudicial	He was the Chairman of Abertillery BG Rugby Football Club, the applicants for a grant
Gill Clark	15: Grant applications	51	Personal only	She was the Chairman's wife.

39. MINUTES – COUNCIL – 27 JUNE 2018

Council RESOLVED that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 27 June 2018 be confirmed as a correct record, for signature by the Chair.

40. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

There were no public questions for this meeting.

41. COUNCIL ACTION LIST

Councillor Phillips referred to decision 112 (4). He stated that all the floodlights at the Abertillery War Memorial were working. If the floodlights were redirected as suggested by Councillor Morgan, they would shine on the end wall of the adjacent house, which was not desirable. He suggested that this item now be removed from the action list.

Councillor Simmons referred to decision 11 (27 June 2018). He stated that the public questioners were very keen to progress a campaign for an Abertillery Rail Link and asked whether they could be invited to meetings of the Well-being Working Group, as this could be a well-being project. The Clerk confirmed that anyone could be invited to attend working group meetings and contribute. However, if they were to be permanent members of the working group, Council would need to agree that.

Council AGREED:

(1) to note the progress reported and
(2) to remove reporting back on floodlighting at the War Memorial from the action list.

42. POLICE UPDATE

The report received from the Police was **NOTED.**

43. CENTENARY EVENTS 2018 WORKING GROUP (CEWG) REPORT

Councillor Dyson (Chair of the CEWG) reported (main points):

- the working group was now meeting every two weeks and had met on 17 July
- the Council's Silent Soldier had been installed
- the "there but not there" silhouettes bid was being chased to ensure they arrived on time for the WW1 Party in the Park
- the Royal British Legion had provided £100 for prizes for the children's (year 5 and year 6) WW1 poetry competition
- flyers and posters had gone to the schools and been put on Facebook
- the WW1 Party in the Park would be held on the cricket pitch at Abertillery Park; approval to use the rugby pitch had been refused
- the day would include a local talent competition, with local bands having a slot to perform and promote themselves
- there would be stalls, toilets, an Abba tribute band, a stage, lighting, military displays, bins, St John's Ambulance etc, which needed to be paid for
- discussions were being held with local bus companies on a park and ride service
- lists of who would be performing and costs were being prepared
- it was not possible to get a grant from the Armed Forces Covenant as their area grants committee did not meet until after the event, in late September
- other options for external funding would be explored
- more money was needed to ensure a successful event in any case
- the Council was asked to earmark an extra £7,500 from reserves, to be used if other funding did not become available from external sources
- she hoped this would be one of the best events A&LCC had ever put on
- the Council had already paid for talks in four local primary schools; the CEWG had agreed that these should take place in all the local primary schools, with the extra cost (£150) met from the money already set aside.

The Deputy Clerk confirmed that the current estimate of costs was £9,183 but this did not include everything which would need to be paid for (e.g. lighting). Approx £4,000 remained from the money already earmarked by the Council for centenary events. Other event organisers had been contacted and the average cost for an event such as

WW1 Party in the Park was around £10,000.

Councillor Dyson proposed that an extra £7,500 be earmarked from reserves, for use if needed, and asked whether other members were interested in helping out.

The Chair stated that Councillor Rees had signalled his resignation from the working group but had since reconsidered and asked if he could withdraw his resignation. She felt that Councillor Rees had made a good contribution already and should be able to stay on the working group.

The Clerk explained that if a member resigned, they could not withdraw that. However, the Council could agree to re-appoint Councillor Rees to the working group.

Lengthy discussion ensued on the membership of the working group and the need for all members to help where they could with arrangements for the WW1 Party in the Park.

It was pointed out that Councillor Morgan had resigned as Chair of the working group but had not signalled whether he had resigned from the group altogether. He had been asked twice for confirmation by the Clerk, in writing, but he had not replied.

Councillor Williams stated that she would like to serve on the working group.

Councillor Smith had not attended working group meetings to date, because he had not been informed of meetings by the former Chair. He stated that he would however attend future meetings of the working group, now that he knew about them.

Councillor White stated that he wished to remain on the working group but may not be able to attend many meetings.

Questions were asked about the validity of the working group, as so few members had attended, and about the suggested involvement of the Well-being Working Group.

Councillor Dyson explained that the Royal British Legion and Comrades reps were attending meetings and helping, but more help was needed from A&LCC councillors.

Councillor Simmons (Chairman of the Well-being Working Group) stated that the WW1 Party in the Park was clearly a community well-being project. He had therefore asked members of the Well-being Working Group to assist where needed (but withdrawn the earlier suggestion that WW1 Party in the Park come under that working group's remit).

Councillor Phillips stated that he was working closely with the Chair of the working group, in his Ffrindiau Tyleri (FT) role, as FT would be supplying gazebos, barriers etc. FT would appreciate recognition in the event publicity, for their contribution.

Council **AGREED:**

(1) to note progress made on the WW1 Party in the Park
(2) to re-appoint Councillor Allen Rees to serve on the CEWG
(3) to accept Councillor Perry Morgan's resignation from the CEWG
(4) to appoint Councillor Trudy Williams to serve on the CEWG, in place of Councillor

Perry Morgan
(5) to earmark an extra £7,500 from reserves for spending on the WW1 Party in the Park, should it be needed *(two members voted against this proposal)*
(6) that efforts continue to seek external funding for the event, and this be used first if obtained, so as to reduce the call on reserves
(7) to acknowledge the help of FT in the event publicity.

44. SHOP LOCAL WORKING GROUP (SLWG) REPORT

Councillor Lewis, Chairman of the SLWG reported or replied to questions (main points):

- on the proposals of the SLWG referred to on pages 25 to 29 of the agenda
- on the working group's proposed window sticker design
- that the working group would benefit from a small amount of money, set aside by the Council, to signal its intention to progress a shop local campaign
- that the original poster he had designed, along with the "Keep Calm and Shop Local" poster could be used in the campaign at different times
- the survey he had originally proposed (and an additional question about links to the A&LCC website) could be used for the shopkeepers and traders
- that the questions proposed on the back of the "Keep Calm and Shop Local" poster could be used as a public survey, to be conducted via Facebook
- he proposed to go round the shops with the posters and questions and report back to Council with retailers' feedback
- there was a need for more regular activities in town, e.g. Shop Local Saturday, music events etc, perhaps 5 a year (including Aberfest and Winterfest)
- other local attractions such as The Guardian and Cwmtillery Lakes should be promoted alongside the shops
- a shop local website could be created by local traders, with links to the A&LCC website
- question 2 of the proposed survey did not commit A&LCC to pay; it simply asked if shopkeepers felt the Council should help do so
- the quote of £250 for 10 banners was confirmed
- he had spoken to one trader about what other shops were needed in the town (e.g. a shoe shop, a haberdashery, a men's clothes shop) and what could be done to help bring that to fruition (e.g. advice on business start-up and funding)
- he could get firm quotes for banners, window stickers etc and report those back to the next Council meeting, along with the initial feedback from traders.

Councillor Bard (SLWG member) commented (main points):

- on the importance of working with the traders, not in isolation
- that there was no value in asking the public to support a shop local campaign if the traders were not on board first
- that young people's days, music mornings and other events could be organised, to help bring people into town and use the shops
- Abertillery Youth Drama and Music Society, local bands and local choirs would hopefully perform at no cost
- these ideas were potential ideas for the future
- the first step was to get local businesses committed to doing more to help

- before coming up with ideas for new shops, something had to be done urgently to save the existing shops, in partnership with traders
- if successful, and footfall increased, traders would then pass on the word to other potential traders, who may also then come and open a business in Abertillery, stemming the current tide of decline
- that Council should ringfence a small amount, to be used if needed, but only following positive feedback from traders and further Council decisions.

The Clerk advised that the Council could ringfence an amount of money from reserves to help kick-start a shop local campaign, subject to gaining trader commitment. This would raise people's expectations. If the Council subsequently did or spent nothing, this would damage relations and worsen the situation. He suggested that the Council agree to earmark £500 for this purpose, as a demonstration of its commitment in principle, subject to Council approval at a later meeting to any spending from that funding.

That proposal was moved, seconded and agreed.

Councillor Lewis was asked to speak to night time traders, as well as day time traders, during his survey. He was also asked to add "alongside businesses in the town" to question 2 of the proposed survey. He agreed to do so.

Councillor Beynon referred to an offer from a local businessman, to match fund any spending committed by local councillors. He asked that this offer be clarified and suggested that other local businesses may also be willing to contribute.

Council **AGREED**:

(1) to the Chairman of the SLWG undertaking surveys of day and night time traders, and the public, as proposed by the SLWG, subject to proposed question 2 being amended to make clear that any financial commitment from the Council would be alongside (not in place of) any commitment from businesses
(2) to receive feedback from the Chairman of the SLWG at its September meeting and
(3) to earmark £500 from reserves to demonstrate its commitment in principle to help kick-start a shop local campaign, subject to gaining trader commitment and subject to Council approval at a later meeting to any spending from that earmarked funding.

45. REPORTS BACK ON OTHER MEETINGS OR TRAINING ATTENDED ON BEHALF OF A&LCC

Councillor Dyson outlined the report included in the agenda and stated that there would be an Armed Forces Covenant stall at the WW1 Party in the Park.

Councillor Beynon stated that he and Councillor Smith had attended a meeting on 24 July of the One Voice Wales Gwent Valleys Area Committee. He had handed some papers to the Clerk at the start of this meeting. An update was expected soon from Alun Davies AM on the review of town and community councils in Wales and on a rail link for Abertillery. He suggested that Alun Davies AM be invited back to speak to the Council again in the near future on these issues.

Council **AGREED** to note the reports back.

46. ZEBRA CROSSING AT ALEXANDRA ROAD

Councillor Bard expressed concerns about the proposal to relocate the zebra crossing on Alexandra Road, raising the following main points:

- its new location, right outside the shops, would prevent people parking their cars outside the shops and would deter passing trade, damaging viability
- the opening of the new Six Bells School may lead to a fourfold increase in children needing to cross the road
- it would be much safer for them to use the existing underpass
- Blaenau Gwent CBC had decided to go ahead, with no consultation at all
- shopkeepers were looking to A&LCC to support their objection and take the matter up with BGCBC
- he proposed that A&LCC write to BGCBC, expressing concern at the proposed relocation of the zebra crossing, proposing the underpass as a better solution and seeking reconsideration.

Debate ensued, with other members commenting (main points) that:

- the relocated crossing would be very near a corner, which was also dangerous
- the zebra crossing had been nearer the shops many years ago
- BGCBC moved it approximately 100 yards up the road previously
- moving the zebra crossing would cost money
- this money should be invested in improved lighting instead
- people would find the shortest route to cross the road, wherever that was
- there could be a case to move the zebra crossing, but that would damage trade; this was not an easy decision to make
- there were other options, which provided safe crossing points and parking bays
- islands could be used, as seen in Church Street, Ebbw Vale and elsewhere
- a representative of BGCBC Highways should be invited to A&LCC's September meeting.

Council **AGREED:**

(1) that the Clerk write to BGCBC, expressing the Council's concerns, its suggestion of better solutions and its request for reconsideration of the proposal to move the zebra crossing and
(2) that the Clerk invite a BGCBC Highways representative to the September meeting.

47. ACCOUNTS 2015/16 AND 2016/17 UPDATE

The Council considered the Clerk's report, which he outlined and explained in detail.

A member commented that organisations sometimes avoided writing cheques in March, to avoid the problem of uncashed cheques having to be accounted for twice. The Clerk stated that this lesson would be taken on board in future where possible.

Council **AGREED** *(with one member voting against and the remainder in favour):*

(1) that the financial statements, bank reconciliation, income and expenditure accounts and annual summary attached in appendix A to the report fairly represent the financial position of the Council for the year ending 31 March 2016
(2) that the financial statements, bank reconciliation, income and expenditure accounts and annual summary attached in appendix B to the report fairly represent the financial position of the Council for the year ending 31 March 2017
(3) to authorise the Clerk/RFO and the Chair of the Council to complete and sign a letter of amendment, specifying the adjustments to the annual return for 2015/16 on the basis of the statements shown in appendix A to the report
(4) to authorise the Clerk/RFO and the Chair of the Council to complete and sign the annual return for 2016/17 on the basis of the statements shown in appendix B to the report (and not on the basis of those agreed on 18 April 2018)
(5) to authorise the Clerk/RFO to submit the letter of amendment to the 2015/16 accounts and the amended annual return for 2016/17 to the Wales Audit Office, as required.

Councillor White commented that the previous decisions to agree the accounts needed to be rescinded. The Clerk stated that the above decisions overtook previous decisions.

The Chair stated that a 4-page letter about the accounts had been hand delivered by Councillor White to the Clerk late this morning. Councillor White had also sent the letter by email to some members at approx 3.15pm today. She asked Councillor White if he wished to outline his concerns about the accounts, as some members had not yet seen or had a chance to read the letter.

Councillor White stated that the letter was not on the agenda so could not be discussed today. He stated that the Clerk had refused to read the letter today. Councillor White asked for the letter to be put on the agenda for the next meeting.

The Clerk advised members that Councillor White's letter was about the accounts. The September meeting would be too late to discuss the letter, as Council had been asked to agree the accounts today. He had not refused to read the letter today.

The Chair stated that the Clerk had discussed Councillor White's letter with her earlier. That was why she had asked Councillor White if he wished to raise his concerns now. The Clerk had been on his own in the office today and could not be expected to deal with 4-page letters delivered on the day of Council meetings. If all councillors delivered 4-page letters on Council days, and they needed to be dealt with there and then, there would be chaos. This was not the way to do business. The Clerk had not refused to deal with the letter today but had said he was unable to do so, unless Councillor White told him it was urgent. However, Councillor White was in the meeting now, other members were in the meeting now, and the accounts were being dealt with now, so now was the ideal time for Councillor White to speak and outline his concerns.

Councillor White left the meeting at this point.

The Chair asked for the minutes to record that Councillor White had been given a chance to outline his concerns but that he had chosen to leave the meeting instead.

48. APPOINTMENT OF INTERNAL AUDITOR FOR 2017/18

The Council considered the Clerk’s report, which he outlined and explained in detail.

Council **AGREED:**

(1) to appoint Hugh O’Sullivan to carry out the Internal Audit for the 2017/18 accounts
(2) to delegate the power to agree the terms of engagement with the Internal Auditor to the Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer
(3) to start preparations to go out to tender for Internal Audit services in future.

49. BUDGET 2018/19 – QUARTER 1 UPDATE

The Council considered the Deputy Clerk’s report, which he outlined. He explained that there was currently an underspend (to the end of June) of £625. The current year-end forecast showed a potential underspend of up to £11,000. However, this did not take account of commitments which were not yet clear at this stage and should be treated with utmost caution, as the year was only one quarter through.

Council **NOTED** the report.

50. FINANCE ORDER

Councillor Wall asked why the actual amounts of staff salaries, pensions, tax and NI payments were not shown separately and why part-month payments were sometimes listed. He expressed his views forcefully, that members were not being given enough information and that “things had been better in the old days”.

The Clerk explained that the finance order listed payments which had already gone out, payments where cheques had gone out but not yet been cashed and payments which were due to go out. The timing of these did not allow whole-month figures to be quoted each time, for example in relation to employee costs, as cheques went out at different times, e.g. for pension, salary and National Insurance payments. Both employees’ salaries and on-costs were in the budget agreed by the Council and were specified in detail in the quarterly out-turn reports (e.g. on page 60 of this agenda). Nothing was being hidden; more information was given now to members and the public than ever before; and the purpose and timing of the various documents were different. The Clerk began to explain what had been reported in years gone by.

Councillor Wall left the meeting at this point.

The Chair asked the minutes to record that Councillor Wall had chosen to leave the meeting, rather than listen to the answer which was being given.

Other members commented (main points) that:

- things were done better now, as the Internal Auditor had reported
- members should not ask questions if they were not prepared to listen to answers
- if members were not prepared to take part properly, they should not be here at all

- we do not want to go back to how things were done in the old days
- the Council had almost been brought down by how things were done then.

Council **RESOLVED** unanimously to approve the payments listed in the Finance Order.

51. GRANT APPLICATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES

(a) Abertillery BG Rugby Football Club

Councillor Roger Clark left the meeting, due to the interest he had declared earlier.

Discussion ensued on:

- the importance of defibrillators being sited locally, as they could save lives
- the cost of a defibrillator, whether inside or outside a building
- whether the defibrillator proposed was for members of the rugby club only or whether it would be available for community use e.g. at events such as WW1 Party in the Park.

Councillor Roger Clark was invited back into the meeting and was asked a series of questions. He responded that:

- the defibrillator would be located inside the dressing room, to prevent vandalism
- it would be for the rugby club, bowls club, cricket club and others to use
- the dressing room would be locked at other times
- for community events, a keyholder could be on site if requested, to enable use of the defibrillator if needed
- this would need to be by prior arrangement.

Councillor Roger Clark again left the meeting, due to his personal interest in this issue.

Council **AGREED** to grant £500 to Abertillery BG Rugby Football Club, to purchase a defibrillator, as long as it was available for community use by prior arrangement.

Councillor Roger Clark returned to the meeting, after the above decision was taken.

(b) Beatrice Green Memorial Event

Councillor Phillips spoke to the application submitted by Mick and Teresa Bishop and circulated to all members and published as a supplementary paper on 19 July 2018.

Following a motion from Councillor Bard, questions and answers and an amendment from Councillor Phillips:

Council **AGREED** *(with one member voting against)* to grant £300, to sponsor the programmes for the Beatrice Green commemorative event and pay towards the engraving of a plaque to Beatrice Green at the Ebenezer Chapel, subject to the Council's sponsorship being acknowledged in the programme for the day.

52. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS / OTHER RELEVANT CORRESPONDENCE

The Vice-Chair stated that she had no announcements.

The Clerk stated that the Council had received an invitation to attend a Fly the Red Ensign for Merchant Navy Day ceremony at Tredegar on 3 September. The Chair, Vice Chair and the Council's representative on the Armed Forces Covenant Steering Group could not attend. He asked if any other member would like to attend on behalf of the Council. Councillor Adamson volunteered.

The Clerk read out a letter from Six Bells Minstrels, thanking the Council for its recent donation. This had been a ward donation by Councillor Adamson. Members asked for the letter to be placed on the Council's website.

The Clerk explained that he intended in due course to add a great deal more information to the Council's website about the grants it gave to local community organisations, as helping local communities to help themselves was a very important part of what the Council did. Feedback and thank you letters from groups would be included in due course. Members agreed and welcomed the Clerk's proposed addition to the website.

Council **AGREED:**

(1) that Councillor Adamson attend the Fly the Red Ensign event
(2) that feedback on grants be added to the Council's website as soon as possible.

53. CELEBRATING LOCAL SUCCESS

No recent successes were reported.

Members were reminded that the next ordinary meeting was scheduled for Wednesday 26 September at 7pm, preceded by Dementia Friendly Training at 6pm.

The Chair wished members a good summer and success with the WW1 Party in the Park.

The meeting ended at 8.50pm.

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