MINUTES OF A MEETING OF ABERTILLERY AND LLANHILLETH COMMUNITY COUNCIL (ALCC) HELD ON 25 SEPTEMBER 2019 at 7.00pm in the Council Chamber, Mitre Street, Abertillery

PRESENT: Councillors:

Peter Adamson, Keri Bidgood, Gill Clark (Chair) (in the Chair), Tracey Dyson, Mark Lewis, Beverley Lucas, Perry Morgan, Gary Oakley, Rob Phillips, Allen Rees, Nick Simmons and Glyn Smith

Officers: Steve Edwards, Deputy Clerk and Richard Gwinnell, Town Clerk
Others: None

ABSENT: Councillors Roger Clark, Amanda Edwards, Julie Holt, Bernard Wall and Graham White

66. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND WELCOMES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Roger Clark, Amanda Edwards and Julie Holt.

67. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Gill Clark (see minute 72 below).

68. MINUTES: COUNCIL – 31 JULY 2019

Council RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 31 July 2019 be confirmed as a correct record, for signature by the Chair.

69. MINUTES: HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 2 AUGUST 2019

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

Council RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Human Resources Committee meeting held on 2 August 2019 be confirmed as a correct record, for signature by the Chair, and noted.

70. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

There were no public questions for this meeting.

71. COUNCIL ACTION LIST

The Clerk reported that the Council's newest two councillors (Councillors Edwards and Lucas) were booked to attend the next Code of Conduct training session, on 15 October 2019, at Bedwas. Councillor Morgan stated that he would attend a Code of Conduct training session if it was delivered within the Blaenau Gwent area.

Members confirmed that they still wished to invite Simon Morgan of Admiral Nurses to attend a Council meeting, when the agenda was short enough.

Council RESOLVED to note the updates shown in the action list and reported verbally.

72. COUNCILLOR VACANCIES

The Clerk reported that vacancies still existed for the wards of Aberbeeg and Abertillery. An application had been received for co-option into the vacant Abertillery seat, from Tracy Postlethwaite. He circulated the application for members to read.

Councillor Gill Clark declared a personal non-prejudicial interest in the application from Tracy Postlethwaite. Tracy and Gill were relatives by marriage.

Questions were asked and comments were made about whether it was appropriate for people who were related to each other to serve on the Community Council. The majority of members were of the view that people were not necessarily inclined to vote the same way, even if they were related. The Clerk explained that the rules relating to qualification for and disqualification from election also applied to co-options.

A member suggested that applicants should present themselves at a Council meeting for “interview” prior to co-option. The Clerk explained that Tracy Postlethwaite had planned to attend this meeting but was ill tonight. He also explained that this requirement had not applied to any other existing member of the Council, most of whom were also co-opted.

Following a vote (with 9 members voting in favour):

Council RESOLVED to co-opt Tracy Postlethwaite as a Councillor for the Abertillery ward.

73. FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

The Council considered a report of the Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer (RFO), proposing adoption of the new One Voice Wales (OVW) Model Financial Regulations, with limited changes to reflect local circumstances. The Clerk and RFO outlined the report briefly and answered questions.

Council RESOLVED:

(1) to adopt the new financial regulations attached to the report with immediate effect
(2) to appoint Councillor Gary Oakley to sign bank reconciliations and bank statements in line with financial regulation 2.2.

74. FINANCE AND GRANTS COMMITTEE

The Council considered a report of the Clerk and RFO, proposing the establishment of a Finance and Grants Committee. The Clerk and RFO outlined the report and answered questions.

Comments were made by various members:

- that two members had already attended OVW Local Government Finance training
- that two members were already booked to go on the Advanced Finance course
- on the importance of members receiving appropriate financial and other training
- on the importance of having that training delivered at the ALCC offices if possible, to enable all ALCC members to attend
- on the importance of good governance and more member involvement in that
- that the detailed terms of reference could be reviewed over time if required
- that six members (not five) would be more appropriate for the committee.

Council RESOLVED:

(1) to establish a new Finance and Grants Committee as proposed in and with the terms of reference (powers and delegations), composition, quorum, chairmanship and other matters listed in appendix B to the report
(2) to allow the committee to decide for itself, when the committee should meet (days and times)
(3) to appoint Councillor Gill Clark (as Chair of Council) and Councillors Perry Morgan, Gary Oakley, Allen Rees, Nick Simmons and Glyn Smith to serve on the Committee
(4) to appoint Councillor Gary Oakley to Chair the Committee
(5) that relevant specialist training and development of the members appointed to the committee (and other members of ALCC) be arranged as soon as possible, ideally at the offices of ALCC.

75. FINANCE ORDER

The Deputy Clerk outlined the finance order and answered questions about specific payments. He reported specifically that:

- the cheque to Ffrindiau Tyleri for £2,000 had not been paid by the bank, as (it was most likely) the electronic scanner could not read the name on the cheque correctly
- that cheque had therefore been cancelled and a replacement would be issued
- staff costs were listed in the Finance Order but had not yet been paid, as formal invoices were awaited from Blaenau Gwent Payroll Services
- the VAT reclaim amount had been paid directly into reserves.

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

76. GRANTS CRITERIA, PROCESSES AND FORMS

The Council considered a report of the Clerk and RFO, proposing the adoption of new grants criteria, processes and forms to help the Council consider grants and help applicants understand what they needed to do. The Clerk and RFO outlined the report briefly and stated that the Grants Criteria Working Group had asked for "approximate number of beneficiaries" to be added to each of the grant application forms.

Comments were made by various members:

- that the grant application forms should be more consistent in their design/wording
- that the forms were for different purposes and different audiences

- that the proposed criteria, processes and forms were a significant step forward for the Council.

Council RESOLVED that:

(1) the criteria, processes and forms for council grants and ward grants attached to the report be adopted and used with immediate effect
(2) minor alterations to the forms be made to improve their consistency and add "approximate number of beneficiaries", prior to their publication
(3) subject to (2) above, the criteria, processes and forms be placed on the Council's website and provided to any future grant applicant and
(4) the Council disbands the Grants Criteria Working Group with immediate effect.

77. SOLAR FARM GRANT 2019

The Clerk circulated recommendations of the Solar Farm Grant Working Group, following its meeting held on 19 September 2019, along with suggested criteria for future solar farm grants and a suggested application form. He reported that the solar farm company (CIC Community Green Energy Wales) had reservations about staging future payments of solar farm grants and that they would prefer the proposed minimum grant (£10,000) to be much lower, so that smaller groups and projects could potentially benefit.

Members debated the issue at length, with the following main points arising:

- the lower limit should be £1,000 or £2,000 so that more groups could apply
- the solar farm grant was about making a big difference to more communities; lasting legacy, sustainable projects were what the solar farm grant should be used for
- ALCC already gave other grants of hundreds or thousands of pounds, to help fund smaller more local projects, groups or causes
- smaller grants could help fund larger-impact and lasting legacy schemes, when added to money from elsewhere – e.g. the Lions' 100 tree planting project
- diluting the funding meant diluting the benefit to all communities
- a pot of funding given some years ago to a local organisation had still not been spent; it was crucial that there was wide community benefit and monitoring
- some groups would be put off by the £10,000 lower limit and not therefore apply
- a more robust audit trail was needed, to ensure funding was spent as intended
- the criteria and forms circulated were a significant step forward.

Council RESOLVED that:

(1) the aims, criteria, process, timescales, deadlines and other details attached at appendix A (to the group's recommendations) be adopted
(2) the application form attached at appendix B (to the group's recommendations) be adopted, issued to councillors and posted on the Council's website as soon as possible, with the deadlines set out in appendix A
(3) the Solar Farm Grant Working Group considers in detail the applications for 2019
(4) the Council considers the recommendations of the Working Group including the final (up to four) Solar Farm Grant 2019 applications and (if required) presentations on 30 October 2019

(5) the Solar Farm Grant Working Group's remit be extended to look also at the process for future Solar Farm Grants (e.g. potentially staging payments) and assist in monitoring past Solar Farm Grants (e.g. by meeting with grant recipients to scrutinise progress)

(6) the Solar Farm Grant Working Group's terms of reference therefore be amended

from: "To consider the way forward with the Solar Farm Grant for 2019 and report back to Council with recommendations."

to: "To consider the way forward in respect of the Solar Farm Grant for 2019 and future years, take appropriate steps to monitor progress arising from past Solar Farm Grants, and report back to Council with recommendations."

78. PARTY IN THE PARK 2019

The Council considered a report of the Deputy Clerk, reflecting on various aspects of the 2019 Party in the Park and outlining the final costs. The Deputy Clerk outlined the report and answered questions. Specifically:

- Party in the Park had been delivered for approx. £10,600
- this was approx. £1,400 under budget
- staff hours were not included as there were no overtime payments involved.

Comments were made or questions were asked by various members:

- that gazebos needed to be tethered and weighted down better in future to prevent the breakages experienced this year
- the cricket pitch was not suitable after a period of heavy rain, as seen this year and last year
- it may be worth exploring if another field with better drainage could be used
- whether people felt Party in the Park was a cost-effective use of money
- Abertillery Park may be the wrong location for Party in the Park as it was too far from town
- Party in the Park cost five times more than Winterfest but did not attract five times more people
- Party in the Park was a free event; people were not charged to get in, listen to music or other acts on stage and were not charged anything for rides, entertainment etc
- ALCC therefore had to pay for the stage, sound, lighting, rides, toilets etc; putting on a professional event came with high costs
- years ago, the town carnival was a great success and cost much less
- however, in those days, there was not the present-day costs of licences, health and safety, risk management, insurance, security etc
- people had to pay at Aberfest or Winterfest e.g. for funfair rides
- stall holders and the funfair operators paid Ffrindiau Tyleri, for the right to operate at Aberfest or Winterfest; the net cost was therefore much lower as a result
- people were not comparing like with like.

Council RESOLVED to note the report.

79. LEISURE AND TOURISM WORKING GROUP (L&TWG) REPORT

The Chair of the L&TWG (Councillor Dyson) presented the group's proposals, attached to the agenda. Draft costs were presented for the proposed Fun Run (by Councillor Lewis). Following questions and debate:

Council RESOLVED (with 1 member abstaining from the vote on (3) and (4) below)**:**

(1) that £13,000 be included in the 2020/21 budget in principle for next year's Party in the Park (subject to the budget process and final decisions in January)
(2) to note the intention to find a new venue for future Party in the Park events and move the 2020 event into early September, subject to further discussions
(3) that Council agrees to holding and organising (with the help of volunteer stewards and an external event organiser) a Fun Run on 1 March 2020
(4) to allocate £3,000 of the 2019/20 budget to the Fun Run, from the "new projects" fund.

80. SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 3(x)

Council **RESOLVED** (before decision 79(2) above) to suspend standing order 3(x), to extend the time limit for the meeting beyond the normal two hours.

81. REPORTS BACK AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM WORKING GROUPS

Well-being Working Group (WBWG): Councillor Simmons (Chair of the WBWG) reported that he now had costs for a Town in Bloom project. He would forward these to the members of the working group. It was suggested that a working group meeting be called.

Shop Local Working Group (SLWG): Councillor Lewis (Chair of the SLWG) referred to various Halloween events and queried whether funding could be made available by ALCC.

The Chair of the Council pointed out that the working group should discuss this and make recommendations to Council, but it was too late for this year.

Youth Engagement Working Group (YEWG): Councillor Oakley (Chair of the YEWG) reported that there had been difficulties getting a meeting together due to the absence of some key people, but this would happen soon. It was suggested that Councillor Rees join the group (this could be dealt with later in the meeting).

Council RESOLVED: to note the information.

82. REMOVAL OF TELEPHONE BOXES BY BRITISH TELECOM

The Deputy Clerk reported that the deadline for comments about the removal (by BT) of telephone boxes was 25 October 2019. Groups could adopt them for £1 but would be under an obligation to maintain them into the future. ALCC could comment if it wished or it could adopt telephone boxes if it wished (without telephones).

Councillor Adamson pointed out that all but one of the four telephone boxes listed was in regular use. One was not, because the telephone was not working. Public telephones were a vital public service in his view and removing them would be detrimental. He proposed that the Council write to BGCBC to seek retention of all the telephone boxes.

Council RESOLVED to write to BGCBC, seeking retention of all the telephone boxes listed in the ALCC area.

The Chair announced changes to the order of the agenda due to the limited time remaining.

83. COMMITTEES AND WORKING GROUPS

Council RESOLVED:

(1) to appoint Councillor Tracy Postlethwaite to serve on the Planning and Environment Committee
(2) to note that the Council had already appointed the Chair (Councillor Gill Clark) to represent the Council at the quarterly liaison meetings with Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (BGCBC), so the list would be amended to reflect that decision
(3) to appoint Councillor Allen Rees to serve on the Youth Engagement Working Group
(4) to note the vacancy on the governing body of Swffryd Primary and note that Councillors Gill Clark and Keri Bidgood already served on that governing body.

84. REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY 2019

Council RESOLVED:

(1) that the following members lay wreaths on behalf of ALCC at the following sites:
- Councillor Allen Rees – Soffryd
- Councillor Tracey Dyson – Abertillery
- Councillors Keri Bidgood and Gill Clark – Llanhilleth
- Councillor Glyn Smith – Bourneville
- Councillor Perry Morgan – Blaenau Gwent

(2) To delegate all necessary powers to officers to secure the usual arrangements for Remembrance Sunday.

85. CHRISTMAS 2019

Council RESOLVED to delegate all necessary powers to officers to secure the usual arrangements for Winterfest (including the booking of activities and purchase of lanterns) within the £2,000 budget already agreed, in liaison with Councillor Robert Phillips, and to secure the usual arrangements for the Community Concert, in liaison with the Chair.

86. GAVO BLAENAU GWENT VOLUNTEER AWARDS

Council RESOLVED that the Chair (Councillor Gill Clark) and Councillor Beverley Lucas attend the above awards ceremony on behalf of ALCC.

87. DEFERRAL OF FURTHER BUSINESS

The Chair announced that agenda items 21, 22, 23 and 24 would be deferred to a future meeting, due to the limited time remaining.

88. REPORTS BACK ON RELEVANT TRAINING OR MEETINGS ATTENDED

The Deputy Clerk reported that he had attended a Blaenau Gwent Safety Advisory Group (SAG) meeting recently, primarily to discuss Remembrance Sunday plans. BGCBC had traditionally made the arrangements including road closures, risk assessments etc, and the Police attended most Remembrance Sunday events to help with rolling road blocks, but both BGCBC and the Police were pulling out in future years, so these things would have to be delivered by the Community Council. Volunteers would be needed to help out at such events and ALCC would have to recruit and train them. This issue would therefore have to be discussed at greater length by the Council early in the new year.

The Deputy Clerk reported that he had also attended a recent Quarterly Liaison Meeting between BGCBC and reps of town and community councils in Blaenau Gwent. Updates were given and discussion ensued about the approx. 20% increase in retrospective planning applications (due to better enforcement), the highway works programme, civil parking enforcement (operatives were now issuing fines and targeting parking around schools), well-being (ALCC was the only community or town council actively pursuing this agenda) and the Public Services Board annual report.

Council RESOLVED to note the reports back.

89. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS, RELEVANT CORRESPONDENCE AND CELEBRATING SUCCESS

The Vice-Chair reported on the excellent joint concert held at St Michael's Church on 21 September 2019 by the Abertillery Orpheus Choirs and Kor pa Randen (Choir on the Coast) from Randaberg, Norway. She had received a gift from the Mayor of Randaberg and would send a reciprocal gift.

The Chair reported that Alun Davies AM wished to attend a future meeting to update ALCC councillors on his work and answer any questions.

Council RESOLVED to note the updates and accept the offer from Alun Davies AM to attend a future meeting, when the agenda is short.

The meeting ended at 9.30pm.

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