

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF ABERTILLERY AND LLANHILLETH COMMUNITY COUNCIL
(ALCC) HELD ON 26 JUNE 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, Gary Oakley, Rob Phillips, Allen Rees, Nick Simmons and Glyn Smith

and Beverley Lucas (after her co-option as a Councillor (see minute 23 below))

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

Others: Police Constable Kate Evans, Neighbourhood Police Team (at the start)
Police Community Support Officer Becky Farr (at the start)
Hugh O'Sullivan, Internal Auditor (for minute 13 below)
Beverley Lucas (as a member of the public until her co-option (see 23 below))

ABSENT: Councillors Roger Clark, Julie Holt, Perry Morgan, Bernard Wall and Graham White

8. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND WELCOMES

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

The Internal Auditor (Hugh O'Sullivan) was welcomed to the meeting.

The Chair announced that the new PC for the Abertillery area, PC Kate Evans, and PCSO Becky Farr, had come to the meeting but had needed to leave before the start, to deal with an emergency. They would attend another meeting as soon as possible.

9. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Rob Phillips declared a personal interest in the report on Aberfest (see minute 21 below), as he was a trustee of Ffrindiau Tyleri.

Councillor Nick Simmons declared a personal interest in the report on Aberfest (see minute 21 below), as he was a trustee of Ffrindiau Tyleri.

Councillor Tracey Dyson declared a personal interest in the grant application from the Abertillery Knit and Natter Group (see minute 15(5) below), as she was a member of that group.

10. MINUTES – COUNCIL – 15 MAY 2019 (ORDINARY AND ANNUAL MEETINGS)

Council RESOLVED:

(1) that the minutes of the ordinary Council meeting held on 15 May 2019 be confirmed as a correct record, for signature by the Chair

(2) that the minutes of the annual Council meeting held on 15 May 2019 be confirmed as a correct record, for signature by the Chair.

11. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

There were no public questions for this meeting.

12. COUNCIL ACTION LIST

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

13. ACCOUNTS 2018/19, ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT AND INTERNAL AUDITOR'S REPORT

The Council considered a report of the Clerk and the Deputy Clerk, containing the annual return, annual governance statement, financial statements and Internal Auditor's report relating to the 2018/19 financial year.

The Clerk briefly introduced the report and answered questions from members about the Chairman's Charity Appeal Account, which had been closed down in 2018/19 and about the status of several years' historical accounts, which remained with the Wales Audit Office awaiting external audit sign-off. The Clerk emphasised that, if the accounts were approved tonight, this would bring the Council up to date and compliant with its legal obligations (to approve the accounts before 30 June and allow public inspection rights) for the first time in years. He paid tribute to the Deputy Clerk and the Internal Auditor for all their hard work.

The Internal Auditor (Hugh O'Sullivan) stated that he hoped the Wales Audit Office (WAO) would take a reasonable and pragmatic approach to signing off the accounts for the last five years, in light of how far the Council had come in the last three years. He outlined his report in detail and emphasised the need for the Council, moving forward, to review the level of balances it held in its current account, to establish what was an appropriate level of reserves and to review its financial regulations and financial risks.

Members also thanked and congratulated the officers and the Internal Auditor for all their hard work in getting the Council to where it was now.

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 2019
- (2) that the Annual Return, including the Annual Governance Statement and the Internal Auditor's report, be approved
- (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 2018/19 and all relevant associated documents to the Wales Audit Office as required.

The Chair signed the Annual Return, in preparation for its submission to the Wales Audit Office on 27 June 2019.

The Internal Auditor left the meeting at this point.

14. FINANCE ORDER

The Deputy Clerk reported that staff costs had been estimated for the first three months of the financial year, as the first quarterly invoice was awaited from Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (which was now carrying out the Community Council's Payroll service).

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

15. APPLICATIONS FOR GRANTS OR ASSISTANCE AND GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

The Clerk circulated a letter and email from Abertillery Amateur Dramatic and Musical Society (AADMS) and read out an email from the Abertillery Knit and Natter Group, both of which had been received after the papers for this meeting were published. He outlined the applications and answered (and members answered) questions. Following debate:

Council RESOLVED:

- (1) that a decision on the request for funding towards Acid Attack Kits in Licensed Premises be deferred pending further information and a report back in due course
- (2) to grant £341.46 to the Space Youth Café, to pay towards the annual costs of refuse and recycling collections
- (3) to grant £300 to Abertillery Ladies Darts, to pay towards the costs of merging with other leagues and publicity, cups and stationery
- (4) to defer a decision on the request for funding from AADMS pending further information on what show they were proposing to perform at Christmas (instead of the traditional pantomime) and a report back in due course
- (5) to grant £250 to the Abertillery Knit and Natter Group to pay towards the costs of materials, to knit poppies and flowers for display in the ALCC area and suggest to them that they knit white and purple poppies, as well as red poppies.

16. REPORTS BACK AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM WORKING GROUPS

Christmas Lights Working Group (CLWG): Councillor Phillips (Chair of the CLWG) reported that he had worked with the Clerk on the tender document, which had been issued recently, and had been present for the opening of returned tenders. Further details could be discussed later in the meeting (in confidential session).

Youth Engagement Working Group (YEWG): Councillor Oakley (Chair of the YEWG) reported that good progress had been made by the YEWG, which included representatives of Blaenau Gwent Youth Services, the Space Café and the Police. The YEWG proposed increasing youth service provision in Abertillery, but the detailed proposals had missed the agenda publication deadline for this meeting. He therefore proposed that an extraordinary Council meeting be held on 4 July to consider this matter further.

Tributes were paid to Councillor Oakley and Councillor Holt for the hard work and success of the YEWG in bringing together the various agencies involved.

Leisure and Tourism Working Group (L&TWG): Councillor Dyson (Chair of the L&TWG) circulated recommendations of the L&TWG. The Deputy Clerk circulated current costings for Party in the Park, on 17 August. Councillor Dyson reported that preparatory work was being done on an Abertillery Fun Run and a further report would be submitted in due course. Preparations for Party in the Park were well underway. An extra £2,000 (on top of the £10,000 already budgeted) would be required, to deliver everything desired at Party in the Park. Additionally, but outside the Party in the Park budget, it was proposed that the Council purchase ten gazebos and ten tables, for use at Party in the Park and other events.

Councillors Lewis and Phillips reported on the possibility of holding an Abertillery Fun Run in October, subject to discussions with Highways and other partners in the near future.

Debate ensued on the costs of Party in the Park, including the proposed Rugby 7s event and the tables and gazebos proposed. It was pointed out that:

- the Rugby 7s tournament may not happen, due to a lack of teams interested
- no additional staff costs (for overtime) were foreseen at this stage
- staff were working on Party in the Park alongside other work, within normal hours
- time off in lieu of payment for additional staff hours would be claimed as required
- tables and gazebos could be stored at the Council offices at Mitre Street
- they could become a community asset, to be used for Aberfest, Winterfest, shop local events, a Flea Market etc, or loaned out to others for community events
- potential stallholders had been turned away from previous events, due to a lack of sufficient tables and gazebos
- Ffrindiau Tyleri also had lights and a public address system for events
- ALCC also owned a small stage, for community use
- the cost of ten tables and gazebos was in the region of £1,650.

Shop Local Working Group (SLWG): Councillor Lewis (Chair of the SLWG) reported that more shop local posters were being distributed and that four new shops would be opening soon. The drone footage project was also progressing. He would be happy to show the draft video to all members before it was finalised.

Well-being Working Group (WBWG): Councillor Simmons (Chair of the WBWG) reported that more than 30 well-being projects had been suggested by members. The public needed to be asked, what projects they wanted. Leaflets had therefore been designed for each ward, to go to every house in the ALCC area, explaining the projects and asking people to identify what they wanted. The leaflet for Abertillery was circulated for members to read.

Questions were asked and debate ensued about when the WBWG had last met, how it was intended to deliver some of the projects listed, whether they were deliverable (e.g. a 9 hole golf course or a fireworks event), where the money would come from, the capacity of ALCC to deliver, costs, managing expectations, project viability and other issues. It was stated that ALCC would need more staff/hours in future given the Council's new £200,000+ budget and the additional responsibilities that entailed (e.g. well-being reporting).

Council RESOLVED:

- (1) that an extraordinary meeting of the Council be held on Thursday 4 July 2019 at 7pm to consider the recommendations of the Youth Engagement Working Group

- (2) that an additional £2,000 be allocated for Party in the Park 2019
- (3) that ten gazebos and ten tables (at an estimated cost of £1,650) be purchased by ALCC for use at Party in the Park and other events, or for loan to other organisations for community events, and these be stored at Mitre Street
- (4) that the Chair of the Shop Local Working Group circulate, and members comment on, the drone video, before it is finalised
- (5) that the proposed Well-being Project Leaflets be referred back to the Well-being Working Group for further discussion.

Council agreed to amend the order of the agenda.

17. REPORTS BACK ON RELEVANT TRAINING OR MEETINGS ATTENDED

Councillor Simmons reported that he had attended a visioning workshop on the next Blaenau Gwent Local Development Plan (LDP), which was under development. People had submitted suggestions for various sites and these were now being taken forward for detailed analysis. He would email relevant documents to all members. More meetings about the LDP would be held soon and he hoped other members could attend.

Councillor Adamson reported that he had attended a meeting of the Blaenau Gwent Heritage Forum on 21 June. He had emailed members with further details.

The Clerk reported that he and the Deputy Clerk had attended a Society of Local Council Clerks Regional Training Seminar on 20 June. He would report back with further details at the 4 July meeting, given the lack of time available today.

Council RESOLVED to note the reports back.

18. DEFIBRILLATORS PROJECT

The Deputy Clerk reported (or answered questions) that:

- three defibrillators had already been installed outside the Foundry Bridge Health Centre, Pen-y-Bont Nursing Home and ALCC's offices at Mitre Street
- another three were due to be installed in the next week or so, outside Bourneville Community Centre, Squire Cars (Warm Turn) and the Llanhilleth (Top) Hotel
- the remaining four (at St Paul's Church, Bethany Chapel, the NISA shop (Soffryd) and Territorial Reserves Centre) may take a little longer, due to on-site issues (e.g. thick walls) and pending firm permissions
- the defibs, once installed, had to be registered with the Ambulance Service, ALCC's insurance etc; this was in progress
- each defib location was being publicised on the Council's Facebook page/website
- training and further publicity would follow soon after installation of all the units
- publicity would include a map of all sites and would go to every house in the area
- it was hoped to complete installation of all the defibs by the end of July.

The Chair welcomed the good progress made recently and stated that the defibs were being received very well out in communities.

Council RESOLVED to note progress.

19. SIX BELLS MINING DISASTER MEMORIAL, CHAPEL ROAD, SIX BELLS

The Clerk reminded members of the request for receptacles for flowers at the above site. He reported that, since the last meeting, he had investigated the claim that ALCC was responsible for the site. In fact, the lease (copies of which he circulated) had expired in 2013. ALCC had however never formally surrendered the lease, so was still bound over by its terms (i.e. to maintain the site in good order). Blaenau Gwent CBC, which owned the site, had however been maintaining the site and cutting the grass since 2013 at least. ALCC now needed to decide whether it wished to renew the expired lease or whether it wished to surrender the lease formally, and whether to provide receptacles for flowers at the site.

Members debated the issue at length, commenting in summary that:

- flowers left at the site were likely to be desecrated and receptacles vandalised
- the monument itself had been defaced in the past
- this would make the problems at the site worse, not better
- the site was a gathering place for youths and had suffered from vandalism and anti-social behaviour for many years
- it was out of public view, isolated and not fenced, which added to the problem
- other sites such as the War Memorial and Silent Soldier were well respected, in public view, and had not suffered damage
- The Guardian of the Valleys monument had replaced the original Chapel Road site as the most recognised place of memorial to the miners who lost their lives
- relatives of councillors had lost their lives down the mine on that day in 1960
- it would be better to relocate the original memorial from Chapel Road to The Guardian of the Valleys site
- benches had been placed at The Guardian site and not vandalised
- relocating the original memorial may help protect it and bring it in to public view
- moving the memorial was not in ALCC's remit; this would have to be suggested to Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
- ALCC should not renew the lease, given the costs of maintaining the site.

Council RESOLVED:

- (1) to formally surrender its tenancy of the site, which expired in 2013, with immediate effect
- (2) to suggest to BGCBC (the site owners) that the original monument at Chapel Road be relocated to the site of The Guardian of the Valleys, for its own protection
- (3) that the Clerk write to BGCBC to this effect as soon as possible and
- (4) that the Clerk write to Mr and Mrs Hayward (who had requested receptacles for flowers) with an update on the situation.

20. SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 3(x)

Council **RESOLVED** (during the above agenda item) that standing order 3(x) be suspended, to extend the time limit for the meeting beyond the normal two hours.

21. ABERFEST

Councillor Phillips reported that:

- Aberfest on 15 June 2019 had been very successful. It included:
 - a Classic Car Show organised by the Rotary Club, along with Fairground rides
 - more than 20 trade and craft stalls on Church Street and in The Arcade
 - the unveiling of the John Selway commemoration plaque at Jubilee Square
 - musical entertainment from children of Bro Helwg School and a band from Pontypool at Jubilee Square
 - children's games and picnic chairs and tables at the Museum Square Car Park
 - toilets, lost children base and First Aid in the Museum and
 - a fancy-dress Walking Parade from the Cenotaph and along Somerset Street to Church Street; this was the most successful Walking Carnival for several years; thanks were due to Councillor Dyson for her hard work on this
- Aberfest showed how much could be achieved by everyone working together (e.g. the Community Council and Community Groups). He thanked the Ffrindiau Tyleri (FT) volunteers and councillors who had helped on the day or before
- preparations for Winterfest would need to start in September
- FT proposed that Winterfest be moved from the first Tuesday evening in December to the last Saturday (afternoon and evening) in November, i.e. 30 November this year. Moving it to a Saturday afternoon/evening would attract more people into town and benefit traders to a greater extent than a Tuesday evening
- this would require agreement from ALCC (to move the lights switch-on date)
- FT looked forward to continuing to work in partnership with ALCC on projects throughout the year (e.g. Party in the Park and a Fun Run) and was able to lend out gazebos, tables, a PA system, microphones, lighting and power supply equipment
- FT had to raise funding to enable it to support more community events e.g. for public liability insurance, trade licences, training and maintenance of equipment
- he asked that the Community Council consider funding for FT at its 31 July meeting and stated that he would provide more details in the meantime.

The Chair reported that the John Selway plaque dedication ceremony had gone very well and thanked everyone involved. John Gower had now offered to work in local schools to bring both John Selway and Roger Cecil's work to their attention.

The Chair on behalf of ALCC thanked everyone at Ffrindiau Tyleri for all their hard work.

Council RESOLVED:

- (1) to note the success of Aberfest 2019
- (2) to support the move of Winterfest to the last Saturday in November and the consequent move of the Christmas lights switch-on event to the same date
- (3) to consider a request from FT for grant funding at the 31 July Council meeting.

22. COUNCIL INSURANCE POLICY

The Deputy Clerk and the Clerk reported that the quote for the year ahead from Zurich Municipal (the Council's current insurer) was £760.24. Other companies had quoted substantially more (in the few thousands) last year. The Council paid more than £6,000 for

insurance four years ago, which demonstrated the value of shopping around. Zurich covered every risk which the others covered and had provided a good service in the last two years. The officers recommended that the Council stay with Zurich for the year ahead.

Council RESOLVED to renew the Council's existing insurance with Zurich Municipal for the year ahead at a cost of £760.24.

The Deputy Clerk agreed to pass on the details of Zurich to Ffrindiau Tyleri, as they were currently paying significantly more than £760 for public liability insurance alone.

23. COUNCILLOR VACANCIES

The Clerk reported that:

- there remained a vacancy for a councillor to serve the Aberbeeg ward, which had been advertised for co-option, as there had been no public call for an election. No applications had been received as yet for that seat and it remained open
- Notices of Vacancy had been published for the Abertillery and Six Bells seats vacated by former Councillors Beverley Lucas and Trudy Williams. No public calls for elections to those seats had been received. It was up to the Council therefore to decide whether to co-opt members into those seats
- a Notice of Vacancy had also been published for the Abertillery seat vacated by former Councillor Amanda Edwards. The deadline for signatures (calling for an election) had not yet passed
- applications to be co-opted back onto the Council had been received in the last few days from Beverley Lucas (for the Six Bells seat) and Amanda Edwards (for an Abertillery seat).

Council RESOLVED:

- (1) To co-opt Amanda Edwards as a councillor for one of the vacant Abertillery seats
- (2) To co-opt Beverley Lucas as a councillor into the vacant Six Bells seat and
- (3) To advertise the remaining Abertillery seat for co-option, if there are no calls for an election by the relevant deadline for that ward.

Beverley Lucas signed her declaration of acceptance of office at this point and took her seat as a Councillor for the remainder of the meeting.

24. PLANNING APPLICATION C/2019/0099 – CHAPEL STREET, SIX BELLS

Councillor Adamson reported that he had been in correspondence with Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, since the request from Ty Ebbw Fach for help with the situation there (e.g. of youths gathering nearby and lack of CCTV and parking). Relevant emails had been copied to members already. The remaining issues were not directly part of the planning application. It seemed that as much influence as was possible had already been brought to bear and there was little more the Community Council could do.

Members discussed briefly their regret about the disruption caused by the opening of the new school and the car parking and road layout changes, particularly the effects the works had on the Ty Ebbw Fach café and business.

Council RESOLVED to note the update.

25. DEFERRAL OF FURTHER BUSINESS

Council RESOLVED to defer consideration of all remaining business on the agenda (with the exception of items 26 and 27 below) to the extraordinary Council meeting on 4 July 2019.

26. 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.

27. CHRISTMAS LIGHTS

The Clerk circulated a summary, showing key information contained in the tenders received from three companies for the supply, installation and removal of Christmas lights in the ALCC area for the next three years (with an option to extend for a further two years). He outlined the quotes in detail, along with the content of conversations he had held with the various tenderers (e.g. seeking clarification of quotes and terms) since the three tenders were received on 24 June and opened on 25 June. Two further companies had also been invited to quote but had declined to do so. The Clerk answered questions from members. He also outlined the various options listed by Company 4 (e.g. for real or artificial trees and white or coloured lights, with different prices for each).

The Chair of the Christmas Lights Working Group (Councillor Phillips) also answered questions from members (e.g. about the qualifications and base locations of the tenderers). He proposed that the Council accept the tender from Company 4.

The Clerk reported that the quote was within budget, if payment was split equally over the three years of the contract. Costs would however be higher, with a new contractor, in year one, as new lighting features would need to be purchased. The costs in year one would exceed the existing budget (if the costs were not split equally over three years). Additionally, it may be found that some of the existing infrastructure (e.g. wires or cables) may require repair, on full inspection by the new contractor. He recommended therefore that the Council increase its budget for Christmas lights by £5,000 per year with immediate effect and delegate power to spend that amount to officers, to minimise any delays and ensure speedy resolution of any issues before or during the festive season (without having to come back to Council for additional spending approval).

The Chair of the Christmas Lights Working Group agreed with the Clerk's additional budget proposal and that £5,000 per annum should be sufficient.

Council RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Council enters into a contract with Company 4 for three years (2019 to 2021) (with an option to extend for a further two years) on the basis of their tender, at a cost of £46,800 including VAT over three years, subject to a successful credit check
- (2) That the options for real (not artificial) 3.7 metre Christmas trees containing white lights at Warm Turn and the front of St Michael's Church be adopted and
- (3) That an additional £5,000 per year be added to the Council's budget for Christmas lights, and the Clerk be delegated the power to spend this amount if needed on any required infrastructure improvements or other essential costs associated with the contract, without further Council approval.

The Clerk informed Council that the successful tenderer and ALCC's new Christmas Lights contractor was Centregreat.

The meeting ended at 9.55pm.

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