

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF ABERTILLERY AND LLANHILLETH COMMUNITY
COUNCIL (ALCC) HELD ON 30 JANUARY 2019 at 7.00pm
in the Council Chamber, Mitre Street, Abertillery**

PRESENT: Councillors:

Peter Adamson, Keri Bidgood, Gill Clark (Vice Chair), Roger Clark, Tracey Dyson, Julie Holt (Chair) (in the Chair), Mark Lewis, Perry Morgan, Rob Phillips, Allen Rees, Nick Simmons, Glyn Smith and Trudy Williams

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

Others: Samuel Taylor, Member of the UK Youth Parliament for Blaenau Gwent

ABSENT: Councillors Gary Oakley, Bernard Wall and Graham White

183. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND WELCOMES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Gary Oakley. The Clerk reported that former Councillor Steve Bard had resigned from the Council on 16 January. The Chair welcomed Samuel Taylor to the meeting, for agenda item 3.

184. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No members declared any personal or prejudicial interests.

185. ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AND HOW TO TACKLE IT

The Council received a presentation from Samuel Taylor on the above topic. Samuel commented on and/or replied to comments (key points):

- anti-social behaviour (ASB) was a problem in many areas, not only in Abertillery and Llanhilleth and not only in Blaenau Gwent
- the number of young people involved in ASB was very small
- ASB was displayed by some adults too, not only by younger people
- the ALCC area had thriving arts, culture and sports communities and many groups
- most young people in the ALCC area were involved in either sports or arts and culture activities, clubs etc
- some young people, who were interested in neither arts and culture or sports, were bored, may sometimes feel excluded and had to create their own entertainment
- some stayed home, while others hung around town
- all young people needed somewhere safe to go, and needed things to do, which were of interest to them
- activities needed to be provided and promoted for disengaged young people
- this could be a car park or sports pitch for example, with no pressure to do anything, but somewhere to hang around, off the street, meet friends etc and undertake no-cost activities if they wanted to, for as long as they wanted to; at least there would be some element of safety and supervision
- community councils needed to work with the Police, with the borough council, with

youth and other groups, with young people and others, to come up with a plan of how better to provide for all young people

- ASB had to be tackled when it was out of hand, but “coming down hard” was not necessarily effective; *“you don’t poke an angry bear with a stick”*
- “coming down hard” on young people causing ASB in one area just meant they would move elsewhere; this did not solve the problem
- changing mindsets was needed, not just locations
- if a person was involved with the Police at a very young age, they were much more likely to be involved with the Police or end up in prison later in life
- young people, crucially, needed to be consulted, on what they want, and needed to be involved, in making that happen
- authorities needed to work with young people, not against them
- other areas (e.g. Milford Haven) had “young leaders” i.e. young people themselves leading activities for other young people
- he was happy to work with ALCC, the Blaenau Gwent Youth Council and others, on better engagement with young people and possible future joint ventures.

Members commented (key points):

- youth clubs had been run in the past, but young people were not interested, so they closed down
- recent ASB had got out of hand and had to be tackled hard; some people were very intimidated by young people throwing bottles and climbing on cars for example
- there were only around 4 “hard core” older ringleaders involved; these “hard core” were from Ebbw Vale and Tredegar, not from Abertillery
- communities needed places for young people to go, with young people’s workers to run activities
- some families could not afford the costs of their children attending drama, music or sports classes for example
- it was too easy for young people to buy cigarettes, drugs and alcohol
- this had always been an issue; the question was how to deal with it
- decades ago, young people had youth clubs to go to, every night of the week
- there had been drinking, smoking and fighting then, but it was all in one place, it was managed and it was not “on the streets”
- there were no youth clubs left
- youth facilities had been cut for years, due to budget cuts; this was a travesty
- ALCC would welcome further engagement with Samuel and the Youth Council.

The Chair thanked Samuel and he left the meeting.

186. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

There were no public questions for this meeting.

187. COUNCIL ACTION LIST

Questions were asked and replies were given about the:

- failure of one member to attend training on the Code of Conduct

- Council decision that such training was mandatory
- responsibilities of the member concerned to comply with the code, whether he had attended training or not
- number of times training had been offered to the member concerned
- response of the member, that he would only attend training within Gwent
- need for people only to take on roles if they could satisfy their responsibilities
- importance of Code of Conduct training and its reducing regularity
- re-coding of all old key fobs, restricting access to the building
- deadline for members to forego their allowances if they wished to do so
- lack of a response from Wetherspoons about locating a defibrillator there
- relocation of the Six Bells Post Office to Ty Ebbw Fach
- need to ensure decisions were removed from the action sheet if they were no longer relevant.

Council RESOLVED:

- (1) to note the updates shown in the action sheet
- (2) to note that the member who had not yet attended Code of Conduct training had indicated he would do so as soon as it was available locally to the Gwent area
- (3) to remove item 303(4) (25.4.18) from the action sheet, as all the key fobs had been re-coded and any old key fobs still in circulation would not work
- (4) to remove item 22 (27.6.18) from the action sheet, as Wetherspoons had not responded and other sites had been chosen for defibrillators
- (5) to remove item 25 (27.6.18) from the action sheet, as the Six Bells Post Office had been closed and an alternative service was now being run from Ty Ebbw Fach
- (6) to note that the Clerk would review the action sheet to identify any other items which may be out of date and report back.

188. BARCLAYS BANK

The Chair reminded members of the emails circulated previously about the Barclays Bank decision to close the Abertillery branch on 10 May 2019.

Members commented (key points only):

- that the MP, AM and Leader of Blaenau Gwent CBC had asked to meet Barclays
- Barclays was the only bank left in Abertillery
- this closure would be disastrous for the town and wider area
- Barclays was always packed, with queues of at least 12 people every time; it was hard to believe there was a reduction in footfall, even of 3%
- other places (e.g. Newport) had seen much greater reductions in footfall
- this was a national issue; bank branches were closing everywhere
- a 3% reduction did not justify closure
- staff always advised people to use machines, not deal face to face
- many people could not bank online; they did not have or want the IT or ability
- many people could not get to banks or post offices elsewhere
- the queues and lack of privacy in the Post Office were also untenable
- some people had written letters, to little effect
- the Community Council should write to Barclays, seeking reversal of the decision

- it may be a good idea to approach Tesco about running a “face to face” banking service in the Tesco store, or the Credit Union in Tredegar about whether they wished to open an office in Abertillery in future, perhaps in the old Trinity Chapel.

Councillor Smith moved and:

Council RESOLVED to write to Barclays Bank, outlining the Council’s concerns about the plans to close the Abertillery branch on 10 May 2019 and seeking their reconsideration.

189. COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIPS

Council RESOLVED, for the remainder of the current civic year:

- (1) to appoint Councillor Allen Rees to serve on the Human Resources Committee, to replace former Councillor Steve Bard
- (2) to appoint Councillor Peter Adamson to serve on the Shop Local Working Group, to replace former Councillor Steve Bard
- (3) to leave a vacancy on the Joint Committee of Local Councils in Blaenau Gwent (i.e. not to replace former Councillor Ivor Beynon), recognising that the Joint Committee had not met for several years
- (4) to nominate Councillor Gill Clark to serve on the Gwent Valleys Area Committee of One Voice Wales, to replace former Councillor Ivor Beynon
- (5) to ask the South East Wales Education Achievement Service if they need another member nominated by ALCC to replace former Councillor Ivor Beynon on the Governing Body of Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg and report back.

190. PROJECTS AND PARTNERSHIPS WORKING GROUP

The Clerk reminded members that the Council had agreed to set up a working group to consider and prioritise further the indicative budget proposals agreed on 16 January. The Council had also agreed to meet with representatives of various organisations to discuss further the solar farm grant proposals for Cwmtillery. Some members had proposed having one working group, not two. He proposed that Council appoint one working group, its name and its terms of reference, and that Council decide the group’s membership and chairmanship.

Following comments, questions, answers and debate:

Council RESOLVED:

- (1) to establish a Projects and Partnerships Working Group
- (2) that the terms of reference of the working group are: *To bring forward to Council recommendations for the spending of the additional funds available in the 2019/20 budget and meet with other organisations to discuss projects, including solar farm grant projects*
- (3) that all members of the Council be appointed to the working group
- (4) that the working group be chaired by Councillor Gill Clark
- (5) that the working group’s first meeting be held on Monday 18 February at 7pm at the Council offices

(6) that the Clerk confirm the above arrangements to all members as soon as possible.

191. BLAENAU GWENT PLAY AREAS REVIEW

Several members expressed concerns (in brief):

- at decisions being taken by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (BGCBC) to close children's play areas
- that children in some areas would have nowhere to go and play
- about what closed play areas would be replaced with
- that community councils had not been consulted on these decisions
- that community councils were not included in the list of consultees in the report (to the BGCBC Council meeting on 12 December 2018)
- that BGCBC did not consider town and community councils (T&CC) consultation as important; T&CCs were treated as an afterthought and
- that BGCBC was ignoring its own Charter with T&CCs.

Council RESOLVED to write to BGCBC, expressing the Council's concerns, reminding BGCBC of the Joint Charter and seeking consultation by BGCBC with ALCC on the future of children's play areas within the ALCC area.

192. GRANT APPLICATIONS

Council RESOLVED:

- (1) to grant £350 (total) to the Abertillery Orpheus Choir, to help towards the costs of the visits to Abertillery of choirs from Burbage and from Stavanger, Norway
- (2) to respond to Tillery Dragons Netball, asking them how much they were seeking from ALCC and report back
- (3) to respond to all future grant applicants, asking them how much they were seeking, and what they intended to spend it on, before the application was submitted to a Council meeting
- (4) to grant £250 to the Six Bells Community Centre, towards the costs of installing Wi-fi at the centre.

193. 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.

194. SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 1(z)

Council RESOLVED to suspend standing order 1(z) to extend the meeting for longer than two hours.

195. CHRISTMAS LIGHTS PROVISION

The Clerk circulated copies of the notes of the Christmas Lights Working Group held on

20 December 2018 and a paper analysing how many lights had been erected, where and when in 2018.

Members discussed the contract and the failure of the contractor to deliver. Comments were made about the significant harm to the reputation of ALCC as a result of the failure of the Christmas lights contractor. Questions were asked about what action should be taken, about the meeting held with the contractor on 20 December 2018, and about what had been delivered since that meeting with the contractor. The Clerk also briefly outlined legal advice received.

Council RESOLVED:

- (1) not to pay the contractor any further amount (than the 50% already paid)
- (2) to end the contract with the current contractor and write to inform him of this decision
- (3) to go back out to tender for Christmas lights provision in 2019 and beyond
- (4) that the Christmas Lights Working Group meet to discuss options around the future provision of Christmas lights in the ALCC area (including scaling back provision) and report back to Council with recommendations, ideally at the 20 February meeting
- (5) that the Christmas Lights Working Group's first meeting be held on 4 February 2019 at 11.30am at the Council offices.

The meeting ended at 9.20pm.

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 Gwinell, Clerk