

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF ABERTILLERY AND LLANHILLETH COMMUNITY COUNCIL
(ALCC) HELD ON 31 JULY 2019 at 7.00pm
in the Council Chamber, Mitre Street, Abertillery**

PRESENT: Councillors:

Peter Adamson, Keri Bidgood, Gill Clark (Chair) (in the Chair), Roger Clark, Tracey Dyson, Julie Holt, Mark Lewis, Gary Oakley, Rob Phillips, Nick Simmons and Glyn Smith

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

Others: Sergeant Neil Pigeon, Blaenau Gwent Neighbourhood Police Team (see 40 below)
Jeff Cuthbert, Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent (see 40 below)

ABSENT: Councillors Amanda Edwards, Beverley Lucas, Perry Morgan, Allen Rees, Bernard Wall and Graham White

38. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND WELCOMES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Beverley Lucas and Allen Rees.

The Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent (Jeff Cuthbert) and Sergeant Neil Pigeon were welcomed to the meeting.

39. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Rob Phillips declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the grant application from the Abertillery Blues Festival (see minute 46 below) as he was involved in and had written the application on behalf of the Abertillery Rock and Blues Committee.

Councillor Rob Phillips declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the grant application from Ffrindiau Tyleri (FT) (see minute 46 below) as he was a Trustee of FT and had written the application on behalf of FT.

Councillor Nick Simmons declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the grant application from Ffrindiau Tyleri (FT) (see minute 46 below) as he was a Trustee of FT.

Councillor Julie Holt declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the grant application from Ffrindiau Tyleri (FT) (see minute 46 below) as she was a Trustee of FT.

Councillor Julie Holt declared a personal but not prejudicial interest in the grant application from Abertillery Town Band (see minute 46 below) as she was a close personal associate of the Secretary of the Town Band.

40. POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR GWENT

Jeff Cuthbert, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent (PCC) introduced himself and commented in summary:

- that he welcomed the opportunity to attend community council meetings
- on his role, which was to hold the Chief Constable to account, help create and deliver the Police and Crime Plan, help decide and deliver the Policing key priorities (which he outlined) and ensure the Chief Constable had sufficient resources to enable Policing to be delivered effectively across Gwent
- that funding for the Police which came from the UK Government was reducing year on year; money was raised through Government funding and local taxation (in 2010 the ratio was approx. 70:30, now it was roughly 50:50)
- the new Prime Minister had promised 20,000 more Police across the whole of the UK; Gwent's share of that would be around 200, but it was not clear where the funding would come from
- operational policing was not his role; rather he worked closely with the Chief Constable as a "critical friend", to help ensure the public was provided with the best possible service by the Police
- he could dismiss the Chief Constable if required for performance reasons
- the last Chief Constable had recently retired and a new Chief Constable was being recruited; he (the PCC) had recommended a preferred candidate to the selection panel and, once in place, the new Chief would choose their most senior staff
- he (the PCC) was responsible for the Police estate (e.g. Police stations) but it was no good having more Police stations if there were too few Police to run them
- the Abertillery tri-service station was an excellent model and should be replicated elsewhere, as the Police, Ambulance and Fire Brigade were often all required for serious incidents and co-location promoted better working together
- day to day Policing was the responsibility of local Police teams.

Sergeant Neil Pigeon introduced himself and commented in summary that:

- he was born and bred locally and had been a Police officer for over 20 years
- he was responsible for the whole of the Blaenau Gwent area, with local ward managers for Ebbw Vale, Tredegar, Abertillery etc reporting to him
- he very much looked forward to working with ALCC and would be happy to attend future meetings and give regular reports.

The PCC and Sergeant Pigeon responded to questions, in summary:

- that county borough councils (CBCs) were now responsible for parking enforcement
- the Police would still deal with dangerous obstruction issues
- CBCs had more than two years to prepare for the enforcement role and were able to keep any fines (which the Police had not been able to do)
- illegal drug use was an issue throughout the Gwent valleys
- the Police relied on intelligence and relied on the public to report illegal drug use, so they could go to court and get warrants to search premises
- Class A drug offences were very common in Newport; there had been several Police operations to disrupt supply chains and remove high level dealers
- Police officers were trained in recognising activity such as "county lines" drug dealing, where gangs used vulnerable young people to deal drugs for them
- these activities were becoming much more common in Newport and would almost inevitably spread to valleys areas over time
- a group had been formed with key partners, including Nick Smith MP, local councils

- and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) to tackle the issue of illegal off-road biking
- the Police were making headway when intelligence was received, using drones and seizing and crushing bikes (more than 60 in the last year) when required
- operations to deal with illegal off-road biking were run with key partners (e.g. Tai Calon), targeting specific areas and times (weekends)
- it was important to find more legal sites, where landowners allowed bikers
- it was also difficult for bikers to get to legal sites, via public roads, when they did not have insurance and caused environmental damage to access roads
- landowners who allowed bikers also needed to consider the land around their site
- NRW would install boulders to stop illegal off-road biking where appropriate
- he would pass details of specific problem areas or access roads (named by councillors) to local Police personnel
- to seize a vehicle, the Police had to catch someone driving it
- the Police could not seize a vehicle from private land (e.g. a Tai Calon car park).

The Chair commented that ALCC was very happy with its local Police personnel, who worked well with the Community Council and wider communities, attended meetings with youth services etc. She thanked the PCC and Sergeant Pigeon for their attendance today.

The Police and Crime Commissioner and Sergeant Pigeon stated that they would be pleased to attend future meetings when invited. They then left the meeting.

41. MINUTES – COUNCIL – 26 JUNE 2019 AND 4 JULY 2019

Council RESOLVED:

- (1) that the minutes of the ordinary Council meeting held on 26 June 2019 be confirmed as a correct record, for signature by the Chair
- (2) that the minutes of the extraordinary Council meeting held on 4 July 2019 be confirmed as a correct record, for signature by the Chair.

42. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

There were no public questions for this meeting.

43. COUNCIL ACTION LIST

The Clerk outlined several more actions which had been completed or were in progress since the action sheet had been distributed. These would be detailed further in the next action sheet.

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

44. BUDGET 2019/20: QUARTER 1 OUT-TURN AND IN-YEAR REVIEW

The Council considered a report of the Clerk and the Deputy Clerk, containing an update on the current year's budget (as at the end of June 2019) and forecast to the end of the financial year. The Deputy Clerk outlined the report, emphasising:

- if all the new project funds were spent, the Council had a projected underspend of

£718.00 at the end of the financial year (next March)

- only three months of the financial year had passed, so these figures needed to be treated with a great deal of caution
- there was one significant area of potential overspend; that being Council grants
- if grants continued to be made at the current rate, there would be an overspend of several thousand pounds by March 2020
- £20k of the “new projects” budget had been earmarked for project staffing; none of this had yet been spent, so Council needed to decide what to do with it
- the Council’s reserves were too low, according to all sources of guidance; they should be equal to at least 3 months and at most 12 months expenditure
- with a budget of £234k, reserves should be a minimum of £58k; they were currently around £33k
- reserves should be increased by at least £25k therefore, but that did not need to be done immediately or within one financial year
- the Council was in a good financial position, and was not likely to run out of money, but needed to tighten up spending decisions, so that it remained in control.

Councillor Oakley reminded members that he had proposed the “new projects” budget and that Council allocate £20k of that for extra staff, specifically to deliver projects, which had not yet been required. He suggested the Council look again at the situation at the end of Quarter 2. He also proposed that the £20k earmarked for extra project staffing (but as yet unspent) be earmarked in principle instead to increase the Council’s reserves, at the end of the financial year. His own view was that reserves should be the equivalent of 6 months expenditure (i.e. half the Council’s yearly budget).

The Clerk emphasised:

- the need to hold adequate reserves, but not to hold too much in reserve (unless it was earmarked for spending on specific things in later years), as councils could not justify raising taxes, if that money was not going to be spent for the public good in the foreseeable future
- auditors were increasingly studying closely, how much councils held in reserve and why. Too low or too high reserves were of concern
- the need for members to be cautious in making spending decisions; there was now only £20.6k approx. left unallocated in the “new projects” budget, taking into account several spending decisions made in the last few meetings, and several proposals to be dealt with later in this meeting would require additional spending from that pot.

Other members commented:

- that a great deal had been achieved already this year, with Party in the Park, defibrillators, Youth Services and Shop Local specifically highlighted
- it had always been intended to identify new projects and spending early in the year and “tail off” as the year progressed
- that funds should not be moved into reserves at this stage, as they may be needed later in the year and needed to be easily accessible
- that the situation should be reviewed in January.

Council RESOLVED:

- (1) to note the current position
- (2) that the minimum level of reserves should be the equivalent of 3 months' planned expenditure (i.e. one quarter of the Council's annual budget)
- (3) that the Council ensure if possible that it has the equivalent of 3 months' planned expenditure (i.e. one quarter of the Council's annual budget) in reserves at the end of this financial year and review this in January 2020
- (4) that (in principle) any funds left unspent in the "additional project staffing" fund (currently £20k underspent) be moved into reserves at the end of the current year.

45. FINANCE ORDER

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

46. APPLICATIONS FOR GRANTS OR ASSISTANCE AND GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

The Clerk circulated emails from Rafi Abbas of the Men's Den and from the Abertillery Amateur Dramatic and Musical Society (AADMS), both of which had been received after the papers for this meeting were published. He outlined the previously-circulated and the new applications and answered (and members answered) questions. Following debate, motions and amendments:

Council RESOLVED:

- (1) that the Council declines to make a grant to Llanhilleth and District Bowls Club Ltd as the Council has a limited pot of funding, the club did not specify an amount and ward donations may be more appropriate for matchday sponsorship
- (2) to grant £500 to Abertillery Town Band, to pay towards the costs of the band and their participation in numerous important local events
- (3) to grant £2,000 to Ffrindiau Tyleri (FT), to pay towards the costs of two crucially important local events per year (Aberfest and Winterfest)
- (4) that the funding for the grant to FT for two events per year is taken from the new projects budget this year (not the grants budget) and a similar amount is included in the draft budget for future years (which is for approval by Council in January), as these are annual events, of great importance to the ALCC area and its well-being, and FT is a key partner, without whom these events would not happen
- (5) to grant £1,000 to the Abertillery Rock and Blues Committee (ARBC), to pay towards the costs of delivering the Abertillery Blues Festival 2020
- (6) that the funding for the grant to ARBC for the Rock and Blues Festival is taken from the new projects budget this year (not the grants budget) and a similar amount is included in the draft budget for future years (which is for approval by Council in January), as the Rock and Blues Festival is an annual event (previously paid for by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council), of great importance to the ALCC area, and the ARBC is a key partner, without whom the event would not happen
- (7) to grant £500 to Llanhilleth Tenants and Residents Association, to pay towards the costs of the Granny's Wood celebration event
- (8) to grant £300 to the Men's Den, to pay towards the costs of setting up an area for growing vegetables ("allotments") at Bourneville Community Hall
- (9) to grant £200 to AADMS to pay towards the costs of putting on their Christmas show (Last Tango in Abertillery)

- (10) that officers explore options and take all necessary actions to try and source a new company (possibly AYDMS) to deliver a Pantomime at The Metropole Theatre this Christmas, within the previously-agreed budget (for a Pantomime) of £1,300
- (11) that the Council declines to contribute funding towards Acid Attack Kits in Licensed Premises due to the lack of evidence of need for these kits and because the kits can be purchased by licensees quite cheaply.

NB Councillor Holt declared her personal interest in item (2) above (as she was a close personal associate of the Secretary of the Town Band) before the discussion started.

NB Councillor Phillips left the meeting during the debate and decision on (3) and (4) above due to the personal and prejudicial interest he had declared earlier (as he was a Trustee of FT and had written the application on behalf of FT).

NB Councillors Simmons and Holt left the meeting during the debate and decision on (3) and (4) above due to the personal and prejudicial interests they had declared earlier (as they were also Trustees of FT).

NB Councillor Phillips left the meeting during the debate and decision on (5) and (6) above due to the personal and prejudicial interest he declared earlier (as he was involved in and had written the application on behalf of the Abertillery Rock and Blues Committee). He came back into the meeting briefly to answer questions from members about the costs of the Rock and Blues Festival and left again before any debate took place.

NB Councillor Holt left the meeting before decision (11) above and did not return.

47. SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 3(x)

Council **RESOLVED** (before decision 46 (11) above) to suspend standing order 3(x), to extend the time limit for the meeting beyond the normal two hours.

48. REPORTS BACK AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM WORKING GROUPS

Christmas Lights Working Group (CLWG): Councillor Phillips (Chair of the CLWG) reported that he and the Clerk had recently met with the Festive Lighting Contracts Manager of the Council's new Christmas lights contractor (Centregreat), discussed which of the existing lights should go where and toured all the Christmas lights locations, to identify any issues and ensure everything was on track to deliver what the Council wanted in plenty of time before the Christmas 2019 lights switch-on. The contractor was very positive about being able to deliver on time and to specification. Repairs to existing wires or electrical supplies/sockets may be required at one or two locations (e.g. Alexandra Road, Six Bells). Additionally, a different tree had been identified as more suitable for Christmas lights at Ty-Dan-y-Wal (instead of the previously-agreed fir tree) due to the amount of growth since the fir tree was decided upon, two years ago. All lights would be fitted and tested, and any repairs carried out, at least a week before switch-on (30 November).

Leisure and Tourism Working Group (L&TWG): Councillor Dyson (Chair of the L&TWG) referred to the report and recommendations of the L&TWG which had been circulated to members on 24 July by email. She sought volunteers for the morning set-up and evening take-down of Party in the Park on 17 August 2019. The Clerk pointed out that the Council

had not agreed to hold a Fun Run, so it could not agree a change of date, but it could agree to hold a Fun Run in principle, subject to considering costs and other issues at a later date.

Shop Local Working Group (SLWG): Councillor Lewis (Chair of the SLWG) referred to the report and recommendations of the SLWG which had been circulated to members on 24 July by email. He updated members on the intended clean-up of the Green Walk area on 3 August and sought more volunteers. He queried the duplication of businesses in Abertillery town and the change of use (to another hairdressers) of the former Shoe Zone shop. He also referred to the lack of public toilets in Abertillery. The Clerk reported that Blaenau Gwent CBC was the planning authority and would consider the use of different units in town centres as well as specific planning applications, to ensure vitality and viability of town centres and prevent over-duplication. The Council had already agreed to discuss public toilets at the September meeting, with representatives of BGCBC.

Youth Engagement Working Group (YEWG): Councillor Oakley (Chair of the YEWG) outlined the report of the YEWG, copies of which were circulated at the meeting (and are available on request).

Well-being Working Group (WBWG): Councillor Simmons (Chair of the WBWG) reported that he would arrange a meeting of the WBWG soon to consider ward projects. Work on the common projects was continuing. He would submit a motion to the next Council meeting, to fund Town in Bloom (at £25k in year one and £5k per year thereafter).

Grants Criteria Working Group (GCWG): Councillor Gill Clark (Chair of the GCWG) stated that she would arrange a meeting in the near future.

Solar Farm Grant Working Group (SFGWG): Councillor Gill Clark (Chair of the SFGWG) stated that she would arrange a meeting in the near future.

Council RESOLVED:

- (1) to approve the change of which tree will be used at Ty-Dan-y-Wal
- (2) to agree in principle (subject to further consideration at a later date of any costs and any other potential commitments) to a Fun Run on 1 March 2020
- (3) that members volunteer to help with the set-up (at 9am) and take-down (at 7pm) of Party in the Park on 17 August 2019 as soon as possible
- (4) to note the intended clean-up of the Green Walk area on 3 August 2019
- (5) that Councillor Lewis contact BGCBC directly with his queries about the change of use of the former Shoe Zone shop and duplication of uses in Abertillery town centre
- (6) that all other working group reports and updates be noted.

49. MOTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

A. Councillor Gary Oakley outlined his first motion (issued with the agenda).

Council RESOLVED:

- (1) That ALCC pays £3,380 to the Space Youth Café as soon as possible, to pay for meals to be provided for around 20 to 30 young people every Wednesday, Thursday and Friday night for the next 52 weeks.

- (2) That this funding be taken from the new projects budget.

B. Councillor Mark Lewis outlined his motion (issued with the agenda). In answer to queries, he stated that he was asking for the Council's support to the principle of working together jointly with other agencies to resolve the roaming sheep problem. He was happy to attend any relevant meetings. This did not imply ALCC had any responsibility and there would be no cost to giving its support.

Council RESOLVED:

- (3) To support the principle of working together, with Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, farmers and the Police to solve the problem of sheep escaping from local farmland and roaming around local streets (NB recognising that ALCC has no responsibility for taking action on roaming sheep and at no cost to ALCC).

C. Councillor Gary Oakley outlined his second motion (issued with the agenda). Council had already agreed to give the officers delegated power to get the defibrillators installed and to organise publicity and training. However, additional funds were needed to ensure the project was completed properly and he suggested that a small number of members be involved in helping officers with the required publicity.

Councillor Dyson reported that Henleys Buses had already agreed to display any ALCC publicity materials (leaflets, posters etc) on their buses, free of charge.

Council RESOLVED:

- (4) To set aside £2,000 for advertising, printing and publication of documents (leaflets etc) and distribution of publicity required for the ongoing defibrillator project
- (5) that Councillors Oakley, Gill Clark and Bidgood work with officers to complete the publicity required
- (6) that all advertising and documents include the Council logo and any other relevant Council information, to ensure the project is recognised as being ALCC-funded and
- (7) that this funding be taken from the new projects budget.

50. THIS IS ABERTILLERY VIDEO (SHOP LOCAL)

The Clerk reported that discussions had been held about version 1 of the video (which had been circulated to all members by Councillor Lewis on 28 June 2019) with members representing the Shop Local Working Group and the Abertillery ward, along with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Council. He had drawn up a list of changes those members (and he) wished to make to the video. He was meeting the producer of the video on 1 August to discuss the changes and the way ahead. He would report back further in due course.

Council RESOLVED to note the update.

51. DISPLAY BOARD AND PUBLICITY OR PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS

The Chair referred to the need for improved publicity and information about the Community Council, including a display board (to be paid for if agreed today) and banners (to be paid

for from the Party in the Park budget). She also referred to the banner design attached to the agenda.

Council RESOLVED:

- (1) To allocate an additional £200 from the new projects budget to pay for display boards and other appropriate publicity, promotion or display materials
- (2) that two ALCC display banners be purchased from the Party in the Park budget
- (3) that the banner design be agreed.

52. COUNCILLOR VACANCIES

The Clerk reported that two vacancies remained, for councillors to serve the Aberbeeg and Abertillery wards. These had been advertised for co-option, as there had been no public call for an election to either seat, but no applications had been received yet.

Council RESOLVED to note the update.

53. COMMITTEES AND WORKING GROUPS

Council RESOLVED:

- (1) To appoint Councillor Amanda Edwards to serve on the Planning and Environment Committee
- (2) To appoint Councillor Beverley Lucas to serve on the Planning and Environment Committee
- (3) To appoint Councillor Beverley Lucas to serve on the Leisure and Tourism Working Group
- (4) To nominate Councillor Beverley Lucas to serve on the governing body of Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helwg.

54. CHARTER OF COMMON AGREEMENT

The Clerk reported that he had informed Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (BGCBC) and the other town and community councils (T&CCs) in the area that ALCC had agreed the recently reviewed Charter of Common Agreement (between BGCBC and the four local T&CCs). Feedback was awaited on whether all the other councils had agreed it.

Councillor Simmons stated that a number of queries about the Charter had been raised at a recent meeting of the Joint Committee of Local Councils (JCLC). He also asked whether Clerks attended the JCLC meetings, as this was not clear from recent comments. The Clerk replied that Clerks did attend the JCLC meetings, when they were available to do so.

Council RESOLVED to note the update.

55. REPORTS BACK ON RELEVANT TRAINING OR MEETINGS ATTENDED

Councillor Simmons reported that he had attended a Stakeholder Conference held by the Public Services Board for Blaenau Gwent. Over 120 people had attended. The JCLC had requested recently that the T&CCs in the Blaenau Gwent area be represented on the Public

Services Board in future.

The Clerk referred to the online training modules circulated recently and encouraged members to complete them, as well as attending face to face training sessions run by One Voice Wales. He and the Deputy Clerk had learned recently (from Understanding the Law training and Advanced Local Government Finance training) that the power to spend under the Power of Well-being in Wales (ref the Local Government Measure 2011) was subject to the spending limit introduced by Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972. In other words, ALCC could only spend up to that limit (currently approx. £95,000) on “well-being” initiatives, which were not specifically empowered by other legislation. This was not seen as a problem, but members needed to be aware of the limits on their powers of action and spending when setting future budgets and precepts.

Council RESOLVED to note the reports back.

56. CHAIR’S ANNOUNCEMENTS, RELEVANT CORRESPONDENCE AND CELEBRATING SUCCESS

The Vice-Chair reported on the excellent performance of The Little Mermaid by the Junior Section of AYDMS. On her motion:

Council RESOLVED to write with the Council’s congratulations to the AYDMS Junior Section and announce their excellent performance on the Council’s website.

The meeting ended at 10.00pm.

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, Town Clerk