

**MINUTES OF AN EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF ABERTILLERY AND LLANHILLETH
COMMUNITY COUNCIL (ALCC) HELD ON 4 JULY 2019 at 7.00pm
in the Council Chamber, Mitre Street, Abertillery**

PRESENT: Councillors:

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

Officers: Richard Gwinnell, Town Clerk

Others: Deborah Pitt and three colleagues from the Space Youth Café Off the Streets Committee

ABSENT: Councillors Gill Clark (Chair), Roger Clark, Julie Holt and Graham White

28. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Roger Clark, Gill Clark (Chair) and Julie Holt.

29. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No members declared any personal interests.

Councillor Morgan and the four representatives of the Space Youth Café Off the Streets Committee arrived at this point.

30. REPORT BACK FROM THE YOUTH ENGAGEMENT WORKING GROUP

Councillor Wall arrived at this point.

Representatives of the Space Youth Café Off the Streets Committee were welcomed to the meeting and invited to speak about their work at this point. They reported in summary (or answered questions) that:

- the Space Youth Café (SYC) project had been running for about 8 years
- they worked with many children and young people from the age of 11 to 18, running activities which engaged them in a positive, not negative, way
- engagement was not always positive, but every effort was made to succeed
- many of these young people were blamed for much of the anti-social behaviour experienced in and around Abertillery
- many of them had undergone a massive improvement in behaviour and attitude as a result of the work of the SYC
- a Youth Forum was being developed, to work alongside the existing Blaenau Gwent Youth Forum
- many young people came to the SYC for support they lacked outside
- on average, 25 to 30 young people attended the SYC per night

- the SYC had 4 staff on site, including a volunteer who had attended as a youth
- there were over 300 “returning” young people in total on the SYC’s books
- young people came to the Abertillery SYC from many other areas, both from within the ALCC area and from other towns/areas further afield
- the SYC worked with many children and young people that no-one else wanted to work with; some of them were very hard to reach and engage with
- the SYC was funded in the main by Children in Need (until December 2020), with small additional grants from other sources for specific projects
- after December 2020, there was no funding stream in place at present
- a good mix of boys and girls attended; roughly 50:50
- the SYC provided food on a Friday night, as some children and young people would not get another proper meal until they went to school on the following Monday
- 30 to 35 children and young people were fed, from a budget of £10 in total.

Councillor Oakley (Chair of the Youth Engagement Working Group) (YEWG) explained:

- reports of problems caused by youths in and around Abertillery were persistent
- ALCC had recently increased its budget, partly to try and address this issue
- the YEWG had held several meetings, successfully getting various agencies (ALCC, the SYC, Blaenau Gwent Youth Services and the Police) to work together, as never before, to consider the issues and possible solutions
- youth services budgets had been cut significantly, for many years
- the agencies were now working together, but there was a lack of people and money
- he proposed in his motion that Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council (ALCC) pay for an additional four youth workers, and agency staff to ensure speedy youth worker recruitment, to secure better youth service provision, five nights a week
- the funding would be paid by ALCC to Blaenau Gwent Youth Services (BGYS)
- the additional youth workers would be managed and supervised by BGYS and the Space Youth Café
- this was not a complete answer to the problems of lack of youth services and anti-social behaviour, but it was a step in the right direction; the situation could not be changed overnight
- BGYS and the SYC would report back on progress and this could be monitored by ALCC, so that changes could be made where things were not working
- time was short, to ensure additional youth workers were in place before the summer
- the funding he proposed was for one calendar year only
- this was about ALCC helping young people and helping its other communities.

Questions were asked and comments were made by other members:

- it was hoped this would lead to a reduction in anti-social behaviour on the streets
- whether the funding included all staff costs including national insurance etc?
- that the SYC was badly located on Tillery Street; it should be relocated away from such a built-up shopping and residential area
- the SYC only paid £65 a week rent; it was difficult to get somewhere else
- public money was often spent on less worthy causes; this was the best thing ALCC could do with this money, to help deliver tangible and positive outcomes
- many young people had nothing to go home for, no one else at home and no food when they got there

- the UK was the sixth wealthiest nation in the world; children going without food from Friday to Monday was shocking
- the SYC was also helping children and young people learn how to cook
- the SYC provided an amazing service, for very little money
- this was the first stage in a process; more agencies needed to get on board in future
- whether the proposal was for £34,000 to be provided every year?
- which nights this covered; weekdays only or weekends as well?
- whether this money was for the whole borough area, or Abertillery only?
- whether ALCC could agree to spend more, to increase the food budget?

Councillor Oakley and representatives of the SYC responded that:

- the idea was that the new youth workers would be outside, speaking to young people wherever they were (not stuck inside a building), to engage with them positively
- the funding proposed was to meet the total costs of the extra staff needed, including national insurance etc
- BGYS and the SYC had the skills and capacity to deliver the extra youth services entailed, whereas ALCC did not; hence the proposal for ALCC to give this funding to BGYS and the SYC
- the SYC should be moved but finding other premises was not easy; this could be a later phase of the YEWG's work
- this funding was for one year only; ALCC could consider next year, what it wished to do then
- the new workers would be detached workers, going to "hot spots" where the young people were and asking them what they wanted
- young people would be asked what nights they wanted provision; this was about providing youth services for a minimum of five nights a week
- Saturday and Sunday nights could be considered, with the new youth workers
- the young people only had two nights a week coverage at present from BGYS
- this money was for the Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council area only, not to be used for the wider Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council area
- further proposals could be brought back to Council on 31 July about providing more funding, for more food for young people.

Councillor Oakley moved his motion, Councillor Morgan seconded it and:

COUNCIL RESOLVED (unanimously):

- (1) That the Council notes and welcomes the significant improvements in partnership working between Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council, the Space Youth Café, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Youth Services and the Police
- (2) That option 1, which is the preferred option of the various partners working together, be approved i.e. that the BGCBC Youth Service and the Abertillery Space Youth Café work together to alter their nights, so that there is five nights a week (instead of the existing two nights a week) youth service provision for young people in Abertillery. This will entail a change in working pattern for some staff and will need a period of consultation with all staff to enable this to happen
- (3) That the additional four youth workers and agency staff required be recruited and managed by BGCBC Youth Service in collaboration with the Space Youth Café, as

- a matter of urgency, to ensure this increase in youth service provision is possible before the summer holidays
- (4) That BGCBC Youth Services in collaboration with the Space Youth Café be responsible for all related management, monitoring and reporting back on outcomes
 - (5) That ALCC pays £33,900 to BGCBC as a matter of urgency, to enable the required extra staffing and five nights a week youth service provision to be put in place before the summer holidays and
 - (6) That ALCC grants £930.00 to the Space Youth Café to pay towards the repairs and additions detailed in their application.

31. REPORTS BACK ON RELEVANT TRAINING

The Clerk circulated the programme from the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) Regional Training Seminar held on 20 June, which he had attended with the Deputy Clerk. He summarised the key highlights of the day, including presentations and discussions with representatives from the Wales Audit Office, Public Services Ombudsman for Wales and Future Generations Commissioner. He also displayed leaflets and materials collected from trade stands (e.g. for new play equipment, “self-watering” flower baskets etc).

Council RESOLVED to note the information.

32. PUBLIC SPACE PROTECTION (DOG CONTROL) ORDERS

The Clerk reported that Blaenau Gwent CBC had asked ALCC, other consultees and the public for their views on a proposed new dog control order (requiring owners to clean up after their dog and banning dogs from school playgrounds and sports fields etc).

Members confirmed that the new order replaced the previous order, so this amounted to no change. The order was welcomed but concerns were expressed about how BGCBC would enforce them.

Council RESOLVED to write to BGCBC, expressing ALCC’s support for the new dog control order and asking BGCBC to explain how the new order would be enforced.

33. CHARTER OF COMMON AGREEMENT

The Clerk reported that the Charter of Common Agreement between Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (BGCBC) and the four town and community councils (T&CCs) in the area had been reviewed. It now needed approval by each of the constituent councils. There may be minor wording changes (e.g. “Chair” instead of “Mayor” in ALCC’s case) but the councils were being asked to approve it subject to those minor changes. All the T&CCs were now also being asked to appoint their Chair (or Mayor) along with two other councillors, and the Clerk, to attend the Quarterly Liaison Meetings.

Councillors Simmons and Wall (ALCC’s reps on the Joint Committee of Local Councils) (JCLC) stated that the Charter would also be discussed further at the JCLC meeting on 11 July, where T&CC reps collectively may comment further or agree to adopt it.

The Clerk clarified that, if the Charter required further major change, it would be re-issued for further discussion by the constituent councils. JCLC members would also have views

but the JCLC was attended by only two members of each T&CC. The Council should therefore approve the new Charter, if it wished to do so. The Chair of ALCC had agreed already to be appointed to attend the Quarterly Liaison Meetings.

Council RESOLVED:

- (1) to adopt the new Charter, subject to minor wording amendments (e.g. “Chair” instead of “Mayor” in ALCC’s case)
- (2) to consider the Charter further if major change is required or proposed by others and
- (3) to appoint the Chair of ALCC (Councillor Gill Clark) to attend Quarterly Liaison Meetings with BGCBC and the other T&CCs, alongside ALCC’s existing reps (Councillors Wall and Simmons) and the Clerk.

34. PUBLIC TOILETS

The Clerk reported that enquiries had been made about the costs of providing public toilets elsewhere, as requested by members, since the closure of the Abertillery public toilets in August 2018, due to regular vandalism. ALCC had previously paid £2,000 per year for the public toilets maintenance service. The costs in Tredegar were approx. £20,000 per year and the costs in Crickhowell were approx. £11,000 per year. These were for public toilets in existing buildings, not stand-alone ones. He reminded members that county borough councils were responsible for preparing Public Toilets Strategies and that Blaenau Gwent CBC had recently issued theirs. The BGCBC strategy committed them to more studies of the adequacy of current provision and options for the future. Since the closure of the public toilets in August 2018, there were no public toilets in Abertillery, but the public could at this point in time use toilets in various places including the library, Anvil Court, the health centre, Tesco, pubs, cafes and elsewhere.

Members commented in summary that:

- the lack of public toilets in Abertillery was a serious issue and was not going away
- Blaenau Gwent CBC had closed down public toilets years ago, before ALCC tried its best to help keep them open
- BGCBC still had responsibility for providing public toilets and should be asked what they were going to do about the lack of public toilets in Abertillery
- it was not for the Community Council to spend £20,000+ a year on this
- it may be an idea to use the £2,000 previously allocated for public toilets to pay towards the provision of toilets in existing premises (e.g. pubs) for public use
- this had already been tried; BGCBC did this several years ago and grants were made, but the premises involved had stopped providing public access, after using the funds to renovate their toilets
- ALCC should wait and see what BGCBC proposed to do in future
- ALCC should write to BGCBC to ask what they were going to do about the lack of public toilets in Abertillery.

The Clerk reminded members that BGCBC had already declared their intentions in their Public Toilets Strategy. Little could be achieved by writing a further letter, which did not look like partnership working. Representatives of BGCBC would however be attending ALCC’s Council meeting on 25 September 2019 and could be asked then about the public toilets situation.

Council RESOLVED to note the update and discuss this further with representatives of Blaenau Gwent CBC at the 25 September Council meeting.

35. SOLAR FARM GRANT 2019

The Vice-Chair informed Council that the Chair proposed that Council set up a new working group, to consider the way forward for the Solar Farm Grant for 2019 and report back to Council with recommendations. The Chair had proposed that the working group consist of one member from each ward, to ensure cross-ALCC representation, with herself as Chair.

The Clerk sought volunteers for the working group and:

Council RESOLVED:

- (1) that a new Solar Farm Grant Working Group (SFGWG) be established, to consider the way forward with the Solar Farm Grant for 2019 and report back to the Council with recommendations
- (2) that Councillors Peter Adamson (Six Bells), Gill Clark (Llanhilleth), Perry Morgan (Cwmtillery), Gary Oakley (Aberbeeg) and Rob Phillips (Abertillery) serve on the SFGWG
- (3) that Councillor Gill Clark (Chair of Council) Chair the new working group and organise the first meeting as soon as possible.

36. THE COUNCIL'S WEBSITE

The Clerk reported that the Council's website contained a great deal of useful information but that it was not attractive, it did not encourage people to explore it and it lacked colour as well as images of the local area. The Chair and the Council's officers wished to review it, alongside other existing priorities. New regulations also required all councils to review their websites by September 2020, to ensure they were fully accessible to people with impaired vision, and to publish accessibility statements.

Quotes had been obtained from a number of website providers, to redesign the Council's website. These included a quote of £1,500 from the Council's current supplier (VisionICT) and two cheaper quotes. VisionICT had worked successfully with the Council on its website for the last few years and had an established relationship with the Council. Additionally, VisionICT hosted the Council's web pages, so it was in the Council's interests to continue to work with them, to ensure all data was securely transferred to any new website.

Councillor Lewis suggested Lichfield and Redruth as examples of good websites.

Council RESOLVED:

- (1) that officers progress a review of the Council's website, working with the Council's current suppliers (VisionICT) as soon as possible and
- (2) that £1,500 of the Council's budget be allocated to the website review.

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

The Vice-Chair reported that she had attended the Tredegar Armed Forces Day, in the place of the Chair. The day had been very good, with the Royal Welsh Regimental Band and Goat in attendance, several stalls and good weather.

The Vice-Chair referred to the success of Abertillery Youth Drama and Musical Society (AYDMS) which had recently won the National Nova Awards for Best Musical (Rent), Best Youth Musical (Cats), Best Performer and Best Supporting Performer. AYDMS represented the young people of Abertillery on the national stage and was helping put Abertillery back on the map. She proposed and:

Council RESOLVED to write with the Council's congratulations to AYDMS and announce their successes on the Council's website.

The meeting ended at 8.00pm.

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