

Minutes of the Meeting of Cwmbran Community Council held on Wednesday 24 March 2021 at 6.00 pm.

Venue: The meeting was held remotely in accordance with the Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Meetings) (Wales) Regulations 2020

Prior to the commencement of the meeting, Members observed a period of silence in memory of the late Peter Cathcart, who had recently passed away.

Present Councillor AL Bird, (Chairman). Councillors SWJ Ashley, RhM Bennett, SJ Brooks, LJ Chaney, KK Manneh, J Rees, LM Ryan, M Villars, WJ Walker and DH Williams, LE Williams

Also, David Collins (Clerk to the Council)

Absent Councillors JS Davenne, M Day, LG Johnson, PM Johnston, F Jones and RD Kemp

(No Public Participation Session was held at this meeting)

CL20/161 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were accepted from Councillor JS Davenne (work commitments) and M Day (School Governors' Meeting)

CL20/162 Declarations of Interest

Members were asked to declare any personal and/or prejudicial interests they had and give details of the nature of their interest.

Councillor SWJ Ashley declared a non-prejudicial interest in item CL20/167 Police and Fire & Rescue Update and CL20/171 Planning Consultations below as a member of Torfaen County Borough Council. He remained in the meeting during the discussions. He would reconsider the nature of the interest matters at County Borough Council level taking into account all relevant evidence and representations.

CL20/163 Voting

It was **Resolved** that the manner of any voting at this meeting would be by calling each name alphabetically with a response of "for, against or abstain":

CL20/164 Chairman's Announcements & Vice Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman of the Council announced that he had participated in the following on-line activities and events:

Paying respects to funeral procession of former Councillor Peter Cathcart
19 March 2021
(Several other Members also attended along with the Clerk.)

There were no announcements from the Vice Chairman of the Council.

It was **Resolved** that:

- (1) the information is noted.
- (2) the Chairman's attendance at events is approved.

CL20/165 Public Questions

In accordance with the Council's Standing Orders the opportunity for public questions was included as an item on the agenda for the meeting.

No questions had been submitted.

CL20/166 Membership

Notice of the vacancy arising in the Lowlands & Avondale Ward following the passing of Councillor PJ Cathcart has been published.

It is **Resolved** that

- (1) the following Members are appointed to interview candidates should it be necessary to fill the vacancy by co-option.

Councillors AL Bird, SJ Brooks and KK Manneh.

- (2) any costs incurred in filling the vacancy are met from Earmarked Reserves (Elections).

CL20/167 Police and Fire & Rescue Update

Councillor SWJ Ashley declared a non-prejudicial interest in this item as a member of Torfaen County Borough Council. He remained in the meeting during the discussions. He would reconsider the nature of the interest matters at County Borough Council level taking into account all relevant evidence and representations.

The Chairman welcomed Geographical Inspector Aled George of Gwent Police.

Inspector George provided an overview of recent police activity and explained how the finer weather and relaxed restrictions related to Coronavirus had coincided with some increase in crime and anti-social behaviour such as neighbour disputes. Theft of pets had been a concern nationally but this had not yet proved to be a significant problem locally. There had been some instances of burglaries in Llanyrafon.

Inspector George commented on measures to curb dangerous driving throughout Pontnewydd Village and Northville, actions to discourage groups of teenagers from breaching Covid-19 restrictions., progress in relation to incidents at St Woolos Green in Northville and police support provided by trained mental health first responders.

He referred to traffic calming measures, discussions with Torfaen County Borough Council and other measures to curb dangerous driving. He encouraged the public to provide details of any incidents. Measures to control breach of Covid-19 restrictions relied upon engagement, education and encouragement. Enforcement was seen as a last resort. The Community Safety Team would be monitoring conditions at St Woolos Green and

discussions were taking place with Bron Afon. He also confirmed the extent to which mental health issues were a priority and that suitable training was provided.

Other issues raised by Members included:

- unauthorised gatherings at Court Road Industrial Estate and local parks.
- anti-social driving
- potential “hot spots” for gatherings of large groups of youths.(police activity focussed on gatherings within houses.)
- off-road biking and electric bikes (the police were reviewing available powers.)

Members noted that Station Commander Paul Simmons was unable to attend. He had advised the Clerk that incidents of Accidental Dwelling Fires had decreased considerably and other incidents were also down on this time last year. Traffic incidents were on a par with last year. Safety messages would be delivered at local events. The Clerk agreed to circulate his comments to Members.

It was **Resolved** that the information is noted.

CL20/168 Council Meeting 10 February 2021

The Chairman introduced the minutes of the above meeting.

It was **Resolved** that:

- (1) the minutes of the meeting of 10 February 2021 are confirmed.
- (2) Delegated Powers granted to the Clerk remain in place until the next Council meeting. (Note: under this delegation any reference to a specific statute includes any statutory extension or modification or re-enactment of such statute and any regulations, orders or bylaws made there under.):

(The Chairman to authenticate the minutes of the above meeting.)

CL20/169 Receipts & Payments January & February 2021

Financial Regulations required details of receipts & payments and comparisons of expenditure against budget to be reported to the Council's Policy & Finance Committee. The regulations also require that bank reconciliations are verified by a member (Councillor M Villars) and that details are reported to the Council's Policy & Finance Committee. (Financial Regulations 4 and 2 refer.) Councillor Villars has verified and signed the information.

Due to the current Covid-19 outbreak, Council was recommended to confirm the suspension of these regulations to allow these matters to be reported direct to Council for the foreseeable future. This avoids the risk of the activity not being reported to Members in a timely manner. The risk of not doing so would cause a delay and a risk accountability, sound financial management and effective scrutiny.

Members considered Itemised Schedules of Receipts & Payments (and Bank Reconciliations) for January and February 2021. Members noted amendment to the payment method for some transactions.

It was **Resolved** that:

- (1) the suspension of Financial Regulations to allow these matters to be reported direct to Council for the foreseeable future is approved.
- (2) the information is noted.

CL20/170 Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IPRW) Annual Report - February 2021

In accordance with the requirements of Section 147 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, the Council had received the IPRW's Annual Report, February 2021 and a covering letter from the Chair, Mr John Bader.

The report would have effect for the financial year 2021 - 2022. Section 13 related specifically to Community and Town Councils.

The Council discussed and voted on all of the determinations relevant to Community & Town Councils in Section 13. .

An individual may decline to receive part, or all, of the payments if they so wish. This must be done in writing and is an individual matter. A community or town council member wishing to decline payments must themselves write to the proper officer to do so (ie the Clerk).

It is **Resolved** that:

- (1) members adopt the Determinations 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48 and 49.
(Determination 44 does not affect the Council)
- (2) the specific responsibilities payment of £500 is paid to the four committee Chairs and Leader of the Council.
- (3) a time limit of one month is set from the date on which an entitlement to travelling or subsistence allowance arises during which a claim for those allowances must be made by the person to whom they are payable. However, this does not prevent an authority from making a payment where the allowance is not claimed within the period specified.

CL20/171 Planning Consultations

Councillor SWJ Ashley declared a non-prejudicial interest in this item as a member of Torfaen County Borough Council. He remained in the meeting during the discussions. He would reconsider the nature of the interest matters at County Borough Council level taking into account all relevant evidence and representations.

Members considered outstanding planning consultations from Torfaen County Borough Council. Details of recent planning decisions taken by Torfaen County Borough Council had been sent to Members separately.

Members noted that amendments had been agreed in relation to a proposed housing development in Old Cwmbran.

The Clerk also reported on discussions with Torfaen County Borough Council and Planning Aid Wales about ensuring that views expressed by Members at

all stages of the application process formed part of the development management process.

It was **Resolved** that Members forward any observations on outstanding applications to the Clerk

CL20/172 Coronavirus Update

Members noted that the latest announcement from the First Minister had relaxed some of the restrictions which had been in place. For the time being though, the new arrangements were unlikely to impact on the Council's working arrangements. Staff would continue to work from home as far as possible for the time being. Council meetings would take place remotely. Members noted the flying of a flag at half-mast at the Council House on 23 March in memory of Coronavirus victims.

Members discussed provisional arrangements to commence the gardening service provided by the Task Force.

It was **Resolved** that:

- (1) the information is noted.
- (2) the above arrangements are confirmed.
- (3) the Task Force gardening service is recommenced from April 2021, subject to any restrictions in place and to safe working practices being employed.

CL20/173 2021 Events

Members discussed the progress of events which the Council would normally arrange. Arrangements had been affected by Covid-19.

The Schools Eco Quiz had been cancelled but alternative on-line activity had been arranged. The Community Celebration Dinner had been cancelled for the current year. The Primary Schools Coral Festival had been cancelled for the current year but there could be scope to combine this with other events later in the year. A report on Cwmbran Big Event appeared later in the meeting. Other events would be kept under review as restrictions and conditions evolved.

It was **Resolved** that the above arrangements are confirmed.

CL20/174 Grants to Voluntary Organisations

Members considered applications from Cwmbran Lions and Cwmbran Otters

It was **Resolved** that

- (1) £300 is awarded to Cwmbran Lions (Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 s19)
- (2) £300 is awarded to Cwmbran Otters, as an exemption to the Council's strategy for awarding grants not more than once every two years. Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 s19)

CL20/175 Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021

Members receive a detailed report on the above Act, which received Royal Assent on 20 January 2021.

Many provisions of the Act would not have immediate effect and would be subject to statutory guidance which would be consulted upon over the coming months. Members also considered progress already made by the Council in relation to key provisions within the Act.

A summary of the key provisions of the Act and details of commencement of key stages, had been circulated to Council Members. The Act would also be discussed at a joint One Voice Wales/Society of Local Council Clerks joint event on 13 May 2021.

It was **Resolved** that the Clerk continue to prepare for the implementation of the above act and report progress to Members.

CL20/176 **Date of Next Meetings**

Members noted that the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 provided for the continuation of remote meetings after the end of April when the current temporary regulations expired.

The Act did not change the law relating to annual meetings contained in the Local Government Act 1972. Further, the current temporary regulations ceased to operate after 30 April 2021. Therefore arrangements would return to normal in relation to the organisation of annual meetings of the Council. The requirement was that the meeting is arranged for any day in May – it would be different next year in view of the elections.

It is **Resolved** that:

(1) the next meeting is held on 12 May 2021 at 6.00 p.m.

(2) Annual Council is held on 19 May 2021 at 6.00 p.m.

CL20/177 One Voice Wales Membership 2021/22

Members considered a letter from One Voice Wales about membership for the coming year. The letter was accompanied by an invoice for the Council's membership of One Voice Wales for 2021/22.

It was **Resolved** that the Council renews its Membership of One Voice Wales.

CL20/178 Trade & Refuse Recycling Service 2021/22 Charges

Members considered details of Torfaen County Borough Council Trade Refuse and Recycling Service 2021/22 Charges.

It was **Resolved** that the charges are noted.

CL20/179 **Exclusion of the Press & Public**

In view of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, it is **recommended** that the following matters be considered in private and that the power

of exclusion of the public under Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act, 1960 be exercised.

CL20/180 Council House Heating & Plumbing Update

Members considered a progress report on recent work undertaken in relation to heating of the Council Chamber, action to reduce the risk of legionella and other works. Costs were being assessed for the additional work.

It was **Resolved** that the information is noted.

CL20/181 Staffing Matters

Members considered a proposal to extend the additional hours worked by two members of staff to 30 June 2021 and arrangements for the annual leave. Members also considered an amendment to the existing staff handbook.

It was **Resolved** that the arrangements reported are confirmed.

CL20/182 Renewal of Lease: Task Force Vehicle BT18GWA

Members considered a quote from Arval UK Limited to extend the lease on the above vehicle. Any changes to contract term or mileage and associated changes in rentals would be at the discretion of

It was **Resolved** that

- (1) Consideration is deferred to the next meeting.
- (2) the Clerk is also instructed to examine options to obtain an electric vehicle.

CL20/183 Cwmbran Big Event 18 September 2021

Members discussed the potential arrangements for the above event and the impact of ongoing restrictions relating to Coronavirus.

It was **Resolved** that:

- (1) the Cwmbran Big Event 2021 is cancelled, to be replaced by a programme of on-line activity on 18 September 2021.
- (2) the clerk is instructed to liaise with the Council's partners to examine the potential for joint working to deliver a programme of on-line activities on 18 September 2021.
- (3) the Clerk is instructed to seek views from the public on potential activities.
- (4) a report is submitted to the next meeting to outline a potential format for the activities.

Signed (Chairman, Cwmbran Community Council)