TREDEGAR TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Civic Committee of Council held in the Council Chambers, Bedwellty House on Wednesday 1st February 2012 at 5.45 p.m.

Present: Councillors B. Willis
A. Cotton
M. Cross
A. Tippings
H. Trollope
D. Howells
D. Rowberry
K. Hayden
J C Morgan
M. O'Sullivan
P. Prosser
R. W. Thomas
S. Trollope
G. D. Woolf

In attendance: Ms. C.M. Keane – Town Clerk
Mrs. A. Jones – RFO

232) Apologies: Cllr. H. Woolf, T. Gregory and G. Bowen-Knight

233) To receive applications for Cultural/Sporting Grants and the recommendations of the Civic Sub Committee
Wales Air Ambulance – a grant for £200.00 was agreed.
St John Ambulance Tredegar Division – a grant of £500.00 was agreed with the proviso that no charge be levied for their attendance at Town Council events.
6th Tredegar Scout Group – a grant for £200.00 was agreed.
Tredegar RFC Youth – It was agreed to invite the Officers of the club to meet with Council.
Cllr O' Sullivan joined the meeting
Kidz R Us – a grant of £200.00 was agreed.
The recommendations of the Civic Sub Committee were reported by the RFO and it was agreed unanimously to grant the Punch House Amateur Boxing Club £150 and Tredegar RFC £150.

To receive and consider applications for Grants to Churches & Chapels (S.137) – None Received

234) To receive Chief Inspector Marc Budden who will respond to questions previously put by Members.
The Inspector was accompanied by Inspector Russell Thomas, the new Inspector for Tredegar responsible for Neighbourhood policing.

The Inspector began by in traducing himself and his colleague and then outlined changes that had already been made to the policing structure in Tredegar.
Cllr. Morgan arrived. There would be more emphasis on prolific offenders, he pointed out that a small number of people were often responsible for a great deal of crime. Here had been an overall crime reduction of 7.2% in Tredegar and 13% across the Borough. There was now more emphasis on people on conditional bail with calls being made at all hours of the night and that there was a 24hr review process. PCSO's he said would still be at the heart of neighbourhood policing, engaging the community and being approachable giving officers more time to take proactive actions. There had, he stated, been 105 less victims of crime than last year.
A Member did point out that some people who were the victims of anti-social behaviour were living in fear and did not report incidents. The Inspector agreed and stated that there would be more of a joined up approach, with social landlords being included. Training was underway to enable officers to take a wider view, with repeat offenders being targeted by many different agencies.

The questions were answered by Inspector Russell Thomas after he detailed his background and experience

1) Members were anxious for your views as to what you saw as the correct policing level for Tredegar, would there be fewer Police on the beat and more PCSO's?

A new police officer had recently joined the Tredegar station and there had been a recruiting drive for more PCSO's. New powers were being delegated to PCSO'S which meant that they would be able to tackle anti-social behaviour.
A Member pointed out that the perception was that the PCSO'S replaced police officers, and related a visit to the symposium last year where they met with an Inspector from Cwmbran who had implemented an effective programme in the Thornhill area. Ch. Insp. Budden had, in fact, worked with the officer concerned, Insp. Kevin Warren, on that programme. He hoped to introduce a similar, back to basics programme in Tredegar.

2) We recently forwarded details of a local Police dog handler who had asked if he could use Bedwellty House and Park as a training site to the House Management, could you update us as to whether the offer has been received and the outcome?

The Officer in charge of the dog handling section had been unavailable but this would be pursued. This idea was fully supported by Council.

3) P.A.C.T. – is it still effective? Members are concerned that surgeries are not widely publicised and question whether these are the right mechanisms for connecting with the public.

The Officers fully supported the PACT scheme, stating that it gave people a chance to voice their concerns, they thought that the fact that few people attended was a good sign. It was pointed out by all Members that this was not the case and that people had found it so ineffective that they no longer attended. Ongoing issues that had been raised at PACT meeting were used as examples for the Officers – motorbikes in Trefil and the barrier across the road above Top House. The seasonal nature of some crimes was also raised – Christmas when people had quad bikes as presents and summer when drinking in parks increased. A Member for Sirhowy asked if the meetings could be held in different parts of her area – allowing access to residents north of the town due to lack of transport. This they noted. The question of the barrier in Trefil was, they suggested, best addressed at Council level, however it was pointed out that the police, local farmers and the National Park as well as Officers of the Borough had been instrumental in putting it in place. The residents of the village had not been consulted. Many Members pointed out that the gate was restricting access to a beauty spot much frequented by visitors and local alike. The Ch. Insp. agreed that if this was causing an issue they would need to find another way around it. It was further pointed out that illegal off road bikers etc. were now using Waterworks Lane to gain access to the mountainside.

4) Members also voiced concerns for the Officers attending such meetings – whether because they only attended if there were specific issues it might be impacting on their time which might be better spent.

This had been addressed with item 3

5) Concern was expressed about a perceived lack of consistency with regard to enforcement of the parking regulations in Commercial Street in particular, as well as Charles Street near the traffic lights.

Members voiced their concerns over the inconsistent application of the parking restrictions, not only in the town centre but elsewhere, with people parking on double yellow lines and causing a danger. The Inspector agreed that there was a need for a three pronged approach

1) education - informing people of the regulations
2) engineering – that the signage should be correct
3) enforcement – the need to engage with the public was raised with a zero tolerance approach not seen as the best action.

Members stressed the need to support the shopkeepers in town, who had asked for parking restrictions to free up their delivery bays.

6) The recent incident on Georgetown Hill has led to a question about the use of Satnav's and whether you would support Tredegar Town Council in their bid to have signs erected in that area highlighting the need NOT to follow these directions.

The Officers expressed their support.

7) Is there a reflection of the continuing economic recession in recent crime figures? The statistics provided on the Crime Map for Tredegar show an increase in burglary and shoplifting from October to November and we wonder whether this is a seasonal trend (the Christmas period) or whether it reflects the ongoing economic situation.

This was not a reflection of the economic problems, indeed numbers had fallen after the targeting of repeat offenders.

8) Members have noted an increase in "rag and bone men" in the area and believe they may be unlicensed. There have been a number of incidents where such people have taken items and recycling from gardens before the Borough's recycling team call, when queried members of the public have felt intimidated. Members have questioned whether there are any plans to randomly check the condition etc of such vehicles and also the traceability of the items taken and their final destination. This query obviously comes from the increase in metal theft and attempts to clamp down on "rogue" scrap dealers.

The response from the police was that the increase in metal theft was being targeted by inspections of scrap yards and the introduction of a "No ID – No Cash" scheme where people taking in scrap metal had to provide photo ID. They were also introducing a scheme to keep scrap yards up to date with metal thefts so that they might recognise any that were offered to them

9) There have been reports that the "Gwent Bobby Van" scheme is to be scrapped. Could you inform Members if there is going to be a replacement home protection scheme to aid the most vulnerable members of our society?

The Officers pointed out that this scheme was not run by the police who simply procured equipment, the change had been forced because of breaches in the procurement system. However this was being put out to tender to different agencies and it was thought that the service would in fact be improved. This was warmly welcomed.

The following question was added later:-

10) Bedwellty House and Park has recently been subjected to a number of attacks of vandalism, theft and also trespass by large numbers of young people drinking and abusing the security staff. I understand that a member of security was also assaulted. Could we ask CI Budden if anyone has or will be prosecuted as a result and what measures he can put in place to prevent this happening again. This is a problem that has blighted the Park in the past - before restoration - and Members

are keen that the good works that have been carried out are not destroyed by the mindless few.

The Inspector advised that a crime prevention survey was being made and was informed that fencing around the Hospital side was shortly to be installed. He understood that ongoing issues with the security firm were being addressed.

A Member and Governor of Bryn Bach Primary School took the opportunity to raise the question of traffic problems and safety issues caused by lorries accessing Tafarnaubach industrial Estate during the busy drop off and pick up times and put forward their suggestion of a timed weight restriction. This she had been advised previously would be difficult to police and asked for the support of the new Inspector and Chief Inspector. This they agreed could well be the first of the problem solving issues that they could look at under their new approach.

They were thanked for attending and for their responses and then withdrew.

Cllrs Willis and H. Trollope declared an interest in the following item and took no part in the discussions or voting thereon.

Cllr. Cotton took over the Chair.

235) Planning

a) to consider an Officer's Report

2011/0345 Retention of outbuilding for recreational and storage purposes, Highlands Bungalow, New Road, Tredegar – Recommending approval of structure.

2011/0299 Single dwelling (Reserved Matters), Land adjoining Vale Terrace Chapel, Vale Terrace – Recommending application is approved.

Appeals update

Appeal 515355 Urgent works notice to listed building, Tredegar Co. Shop, Shop Row – Verbal update at Committee.

List of Delegated items determined between 15th December 2011 and 15th January 2012.

2011/0319 Removal of existing slate covering; reuse salvaged slates on south roof slope; replacement of slate with natural slate on north roof slope; treatment of ceiling structure & coving for dry rot; reinstatement of coved ceiling & cornice to east end of gallery, Saron Congregational Church – Approved.

It was noted by Members that Officers of the Borough had made great efforts to assist Saron.

2011/0343 Demolish existing brick work boundary wall & construction of new facing brickwork wall with railings on top, 1-20 Arosfa Court, Park Row – Approved.

2011/0339 New raised roof, rear extension & domestic garage, 4 Glanhowy Street – Approved.

2011/0350 New shop front, roller shutter & external renovations, 15 Commercial Street – Approved.

2011/0347 Retention of domestic garage & store area building, 26 Bedwellty Pits – Approved.

The report was received. It was noted that the meeting to update the situation regarding the Tredegar Co Shop (Appeal 515355) was to be held the following day.

b) To consider Planning Applications submitted for Council's observations

No planning applications had been received.

c) To consider other planning matters.
C/2011/0331 Single 500kw wind turbine, Waldron Commercials, Unit 29 Tafarnaubach Industrial Estate – Application withdrawn.
Noted.

Cllr. Willis re-took the Chair.

236) To consider the exclusion of the Press and Public by virtue of the matters to be discussed under the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12a and the Data Protection Act 1998.
This was agreed.

237) To receive and approve the Minutes of the Meeting of the Staffing and Finance Committee of Council on Monday 9th January 2012.
The Minutes were agreed and approved as a true record.
There were no matters arising.

238) To re-open the Meeting to the public and press
This was agreed.

239) Correspondence

1) BGCBC (a) Mr C Rogers. Re: Request for Sat Nav Signing – Link road between Hilltop, Ebbw Vale to Tredegar. Will investigate the matter raised in the letter dated 10.1.12 and inform Council of outcome in due course.

Received. It was further noted by Members that temporary signage relating to "Flood" or "Ice" were in place at a number of locations for some time. This had led many people to take such notices for granted and ignore them – even when they were warranted. Clerk to contact the Highways Department to point this out and seek clarification.

(b) Mr A C Evans. Re: Road Safety Scheme, Merthyr Road – Proposed new scheme was discussed and welcomed by the Head of Bryn Bach Primary school. The scheme was developed following representations made by the school (about the speed of traffic) and by local residents (about the impact of the road humps on their environment). Therefore the scheme seeks to reduce vehicular speed at the same time as improving its impact on the local environment.

Received. It was noted that correspondence had crossed in the post and that the Governors were now aware. However they would still be pressing for a timed weight restriction.

Cllr. A. Tippings declared an interest in the following item and took no part in the discussion or voting thereon.

(c) IRAQ The Forgotten Story – Launch Event Thursday 8th March 2012 Bedwellty House at 6pm. Invite for 2 representatives to attend.

Received. It was agreed that the Leader and Deputy Mayor should attend.

(d) (i) Local Development Plan 2006-2021: Consultation on Statement of Focussed Changes. 6 week consultation between 19.1.12 to 1.3.12. Statement & comments form available from all libraries, Communities First, Ebbw Vale Development Trust Office and on BGCBC website.

Comment forms to be submitted no later than noon Thursday 1st March 2012.
(ii) Copy of LDP Statement of Focussed Changes & Report of Representations.

Both received. Copies available at Members request.

Cllrs Willis D. Rowberry and H. Trollope declared an interest in the following item and took no part in the discussions or voting thereon.

(e) List of Licensing Applications week ending 22.1.12.

Received

2) Welsh Government

(a) Proposal to alter the date of local government elections in Wales – Website link to updated Consultation Letter. Previous letter incorrectly stated that elections would revert to regular four year cycle after May 2017.

Received. It was noted that this had been discussed at a previous meeting of Gwent OVW and that a response would be sent via that meeting.

(b) Heads of the Valleys Dualling
(i) A465 Heads of the Valley Section Brynmawr to Tredegar PRE-INQUIRY MEETING Agenda 10am Thursday 2.2.12 at The General Offices, Steelworks Road, Ebbw Vale.
(ii) A465 Neath to Abergavenny Trunk Road Dualling – Responses to comments raised by Council – **Copied for all Members.**

Received.

3) One Voice Wales Training Module 8 Community Engagement – Pontypool Community Council Offices 21.2.12, from 6.30pm to 9pm, £30 members/£40 non members. Booking form included.

Received – interested Members to contact the Clerk.

4) Damage to commercial property
(i) Mrs A Powles - Letter detailing damage done to her shop, Susan's, apparently by wood used to attached the Christmas lights to the property. Incident was also witnessed by Cllr H Woolf and Lorraine Bishop (proprietor of Herberts).
(ii) Cllr H Woolf - Confirming was in hairdressers when part of Susan's sign wooden trim came off and ripped through her canopy, appears new Xmas lighting cable had been attached to the trim but cannot confirm this is the reason why the trim came off.

Both received. It was agreed to copy to Gala Lights for their attention.

5) Brecon Beacons National Park Authority
(i) Agenda for meeting 3rd February 2012 available at www.breconbeacons.org .
(ii) BBNPA Town & Community Council Liaison Meeting & Charter update 10am on 24th March 2012 in Brecon Castle Hotel, Castle Square, Brecon. Please confirm attendance and any proposals for agenda items by 16.3.12.

Received

6) L. Evans Announcing the winner of Tredegar RFC's weekly Goldenballs, Mr Dave Evans scooped the jackpot of £7000.00.

Noted.

7) Monmouthshire Association

Complimentary flag of the County of Monmouthshire, the flag design has just been registered by the Flag Institute and is based on the arms attributed to the ancient kingdom of Gwent.

Received. It was suggested that a competition be held amongst local schools to design a flag for the Town Council.

240) PUBLICATIONS

BGCBC Road works report week ending 27.1.12; Glasdon Products brochures; Aneurin Bevan Community Health Council News Bulletin January 2012; BGCBC Road works report week ending 3.2.12; Ville D'Orvault Press cuttings December 2011.

Available for Members

241) AGENDA

Executive Committee Wednesday 25th January 2012 at 11am Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Ebbw Vale; Environment Scrutiny Committee Thursday 26th January 2012 at 2pm Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Ebbw Vale; Executive Wednesday 25th January 2012 at 11am Council Chamber, Civic Centre – Report for agenda item 10 Regeneration Matters; Executive Wednesday 25th January 2012 at 11am Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Ebbw Vale – urgent agenda item for Regeneration; Licensing Committee Tuesday 7th February 2012 at 11am – CANCELLED; Special Education & Leisure Scrutiny Committee Friday 3rd February 2012 at 2pm Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Ebbw Vale – CANCELLED; Advance notice of Special Executive Wednesday 15th February 2012 immediately following the Executive Committee which commences at 11am, Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Ebbw Vale; Blaenau Gwent Heritage Forum Meeting Thursday 16th February 2012 at 9.30am Tredegar Library.

Available for Members

242) Matters concerning Bedwellty House and Park

1) Members noted that many of the nameplates on the Past Mayors Board had buckled or lost screws, and that the new nameplates had not been put up - Clerk to contact Management to rectify.

2) It was noted that a number of organisations throughout the Town had been contacted by the House Management and asked to contribute to the celebration of the 100th Anniversary of the handing over of the Bandstand to the people of Tredegar. The fact that the Town Council itself had not been contacted caused great concern. The Anniversary – Sunday 3rd June 2012 would be the first concert of this year's season and feature Tredegar Town Band and Members were concerned that the Town Council was being overlooked in these matters.

3) Members discussed again the delay in returning artefacts and it was agreed to invite the Chair of the Management Board to meet Council.

243) Matters of Local Interest and concern

1) It was brought to Members attention that our local MP was bringing a new researcher to the Town on a familiarisation visit and Members were invited along prior to the next Quiz Wizards competition.

2) Southend Allotments – cost of tree surgery was queried but because of health and safety to proceed. The urgent need to review policy was agreed.
3) 2167 Squadron ATC – previously it had been agreed to arrange a visit to the Squadron HQ together with the Crime Prevention Officer. Members were prompted to arrange the visit so that the grant which had been previously agreed could be taken up.
4) It was noted that the Town Council "B" Team had won the previous Quiz Wizards competition.

There being no other business the Meeting closed at 8.10pm.

_____ Chair