TREDEGAR TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Council held in the Council Chamber, Bedwellty House on Wednesday, 22nd June, 2016 at 6.30 p.m.

Present: **Councillors J. Thomas (CHAIR)**
O. Price
T. Smith
A.E. Tippings
M. Cross
D.W.A. Howells
D. Rowberry
R.W. Thomas
H. Trollope
S. Trollope
B. Willis

In attendance: **Town Clerk – Mrs. C. Price**
RFO – Ms. A. Jones

Also Present: **Internal Auditor – Mr. Stuart Bees**

058) Apologies. **Councillors S. Baker, G. Bowen-Knight, M. Turner and R. Watkins**

059) Declarations of Interest.
The Chair reminded Members to make their declarations as and when necessary.

060) To consider the exclusion of the Press and public by virtue of the matters to be discussed under the provisions of the LGA 1972 Schedule 12A.
Moved, the meeting was closed to the public.

061) To receive:
a) report of the Internal Auditor; and,
b) confirm the Annual Accounts and Return for 2015/2016, prior to External Audit.

The Chair extended a welcome to the Internal Auditor, who was in attendance to present his report for the Internal Audit for the year 2015/2016.

The Internal Auditor thanked the Town Council for the opportunity again this year to present his findings and provided a brief introduction to the report, which was presented to advise Members of the conclusion of the Internal Audit for the year ended 31st March, 2016.

He said that the purpose of the audit was to demonstrate that the Town Council had fulfilled the statutory requirement to maintain an adequate and effective system of internal audit of their accounting records and system of internal control; and the report provided the assurance for the Town Council to complete maintenance in accordance with its Annual Governance Statement. The audit had included checks and balances, as listed in the audit programme,

and supporting documentation had been examined.

The statement within the report certified that the Internal Auditor:

- had acted independently and on the basis of an assessment of risk;
- had carried out a selective assessment of compliance with relevant procedures and controls;
- had undertaken the audit in accordance with the Council's needs and planned coverage;
- had reported on their conclusions as to whether specific control objectives had been achieved throughout the year to a standard to meet the Council's needs.

The Internal Auditor outlined eleven specific control objectives, each of which required the Internal Auditor's certification and reflected the findings of the audit, i.e.

- Appropriate books of accounts had been properly kept throughout the year;
- Financial regulations had been met, payments had been supported by invoices, expenditure was approved and VAT was appropriately accounted for;
- Significant risks in achieving objectives had been assessed and the adequacy of arrangements to manage these had been reviewed;
- The annual precept demand requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process, progress against the budget was regularly monitored and reserves were appropriate;
- Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked and VAT was appropriately accounted for;
- Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for;
- Salaries to employees and allowances to Members were paid in accordance with minuted approvals and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied;
- Asset and investment Registers were complete, accurate and properly maintained;
- Periodic and year-end bank account reconciliations were properly carried out;
- Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis, agreed with the cashbook, and were supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records and, where appropriate, debtors and credits were properly recorded;
- Trust Funds (including charitable trusts) – the Council had met its responsibilities as a trustee.

The Internal Auditor thereupon invited any questions by Members in respect of the content of the report and responded, as follows:

A Member referred to the settlement figure approved on the cessation of employment for the former Town Clerk, enquiring of the Internal Auditor's observations on the amount negotiated and paid.

The Internal Auditor said that, in his experience, the Town Council had handled the situation very well. The negotiated settlement figure had been calculated appropriately, taking into account the employee's details and he considered that the amount approved had been 'appropriate' in accordance with the length of service for this individual. The Internal Auditor said that he considered the Town Council should be commended on the manner in which negotiations had been undertaken, as the agreement reached by both parties had been a sensible approach. The process had thereupon been undertaken appropriately in accordance with HMRC processes through the PAYE system.

In respect of changes by certain banks when presenting commercial cheques, a Member enquired if Town Councils could use other financial organisations, such as The Credit Union. The Internal Auditor was aware of other town councils who had placed a set amount of funding outside of banking institutions as an investment over a period of time, e.g. two/three years.

The Town Council could support organisations, such as The Credit Union, if Members so wished, however the risk of losing monies was substantially greater and all necessary precautions should be undertaken in protecting public monies, as the Town Council could be subject to challenge. Therefore, the Internal Auditor advised that, should the Town Council proceed with such a venture, that the appropriate level of support be agreed for The Credit Union. In response to a question raised, the Internal Auditor said that he did not believe that such non-bank organisations were subject to the same regulations as banking institutions. Members appreciated the advice of the Internal Auditor and consideration would need to be given to whether such a venture would be worthwhile.

The Internal Auditor thereupon presented a summary of recommendations for approval, which were agreed accordingly.

In conclusion, the Internal Auditor expressed his gratitude to the RFO for all the assistance during the audit and providing documentation on request. He would particularly like to highlight the Officer's efforts throughout the year in also undertaking the role of Town Clerk.

- **Public Service Boards** – a Member suggested that, should Blaenau Gwent CBC notify the Town Council of the establishment of a Public Service Board, a presentation be made to the Town Council at the earliest opportunity in order to make appropriate plans to comply with statutory guidance.

The Internal Auditor thereupon outlined his conclusions in respect of the statutory Internal Audit Report and the requirements thereof.

Councillors M. Cross and H. Trollope left the meeting at this juncture (7.15 p.m.).

The RFO thereupon presented the report in respect of Earmarked Reserves, which was approved accordingly.

The Chair thanked the Internal Auditor for attending to present a most comprehensive report; Mr. Bees thereupon left the meeting.

062) To re-open the Meeting to the Public.
Moved, the meeting was re-opened to the public.

063) Review of Internal Audit 2015/2016: to undertake a review of the Internal Audit Process for the year ended 2015/2016.
The RFO presented her report of the Internal Audit Service 2015/2016, which was a thematic approach to be reviewed every year. The Internal Auditor, Mr. S. Bees, who had been recommended by the previous Internal Auditor, would undertake his assessment on being appointed; he had been very thorough in this process. The RFO advised that another Town Council had also appointed the Internal Auditor for his services as a result of this work.

In respect of the performance of the Internal Auditor, the following statements were taken into consideration, and were approved accordingly.

Internal Auditor's Report 2014/2015

- Council's comments were "that Council would undertake an annual review of Financial Regulations ….. Members gave a vote of thanks to Mr. Bees for his in-depth report" – agreed.

Appointment: Council was satisfied with

- the Internal Auditor's competence and professional qualification or previous experience
- Level of independence from Council and professional recognition / regulation of independence – CIPFA membership and Professional Indemnity insurance

Internal Auditors Report 2015/2016: Members were satisfied

- With the content and coverage of the report
- That the report helped to demonstrate the effectiveness of internal audit as part of Council's overall system of internal control
- That the internal audit had been planned and delivered in a thorough manner
- Members considered that
  - there were no areas of the internal audit that required further development or change; however the RFO highlighted that, in respect of development, Performance Reviews were now held on a regular basis; and,
  - the internal audit added value to the Council's governance arrangements and represented value for money; the RFO said that, with thorough budgetary control of finances, the Town Council were now in a better position in going forward

External Auditor

- There were no reports from the External Auditor regarding the internal work covered – no issues raised

General: Members were satisfied with:

- Quality of communication with Council Members and the office
- Compliance and achievement of the requirements set out in the original appointment letter; the RFO confirmed these had been met
- Compliance and achievement of the requirements set out in the Internal Audit Programme Financial Year 2015/2016; the RFO confirmed these had been met
- Compliance and achievement of the requirements within the necessary timescales resulting in the completion of the appropriate section of the Annual Return to permit Council's acceptance before 30th June, 2016; the RFO confirmed these had been met

Members thereupon expressed their thanks to the RFO, particularly due to circumstances over the past year, and also expressed appreciation to the Internal Auditor, Mr. S. Bees. The RFO confirmed that the appropriate letter had been sent to Mr. Bees, confirming his re-appointment at the AGM as Internal Auditor.

064) Chain of Office: to receive report of the Mayor.

The Mayor enquired of confirmation in respect of appropriate insurance for external parties; the RFO confirmed she was awaiting a response to provide feedback. A Member thanked the Mayor for the work undertaken in assessing insurance requirements, particularly her diligence.

The RFO thereupon briefly outlined current arrangements and the proposal to review the issue of the chain. She had reviewed the issue and had made the assumption, based on previous correspondence of Members, that the damage to the Chain exceeded the capabilities of Gemtime, hence why the need to send it to Birmingham; this would either be Fattorini or Vaughtons, both being Mayoral Chain specialists. Fattorini had crafted the Consort's Chain for the Town Council.

There had never previously been an issue with Gemtime undertaking minor repairs but, as this apparently required a specialist, the RFO suggested that the Town Council deal directly with the specialist; this would probably be considered more appropriate by the Town Council's insurance company and would reduce the commission cost that Gemtime would have to charge as the handler. Financial Regulations would require that the Town Council attempt to obtain three quotes for the work, but these could be rescinded on this occasion on the basis

that it would be high risk to post the Chain multiple times to obtain quotations, and timescales, as the Chain was used frequently. An option to retain the Financial Regulations would be to send out the Chain to one specialist, asking for a quote, then use this as the specifications on which other quotes could be sourced.

In respect of utilising a courier service, the RFO explained that the same issues could be encountered in respect of the appropriate level of insurance cover.

It was agreed that one quotation be sought from Fattorini, due to previous experience in providing the Consort's Chain, to be used as the specification for other quotes in order to retain financial regulations and that this be presented to Council for approval prior to works being undertaken: Leader/RFO to pursue during the August recess in order to progress the matter.

065) Grants:
End of grant form from Silurian Boxing Club.

a) to consider and approve grants to Sporting and Cultural organisations.
Georgetown Community Association – Recommendation of £200.00.
Re-Liance Bus Preservation Group – Recommendation of £200.00.
Shelter Cymru – Recommendation of £50.00.
Tredegar Business Forum – Recommendation of £250.00.
Tredegar Camera Club – Recommendation of £200.00.

b) Churches & Chapels (s.137) to consider and approve grants to Churches and Chapels.
None received.

066) Accounts: to consider a Schedule of Accounts for payment in June 2016.

- **Flowers / peat – Town Clock** – a Member proposed that, in order to ensure an appropriate standard of quality, the plants required needed to be ordered earlier in the year to ensure availability. The Mayor thereupon commended the gardeners for all their hard work, which was greatly appreciated.
- **Tredegar Business Forum** – payment of the cheque to be **DEFERRED** pending a meeting being convened with Business Forum representatives.
- **Sirhowy Woodlands** – to be invited to attend a meeting of the Civic Sub-Committee in July.
- **Deighton Playing Field** – it was agreed that the SLA with Blaenau Gwent CBC in respect of grounds maintenance continue for the remainder of the year; Town Council could consider going out to tender for the following year at a future meeting.

There being no further queries regarding the Schedule of Accounts, all presented items were approved for payment, with the exclusion of Tredegar Business Forum.

067) To receive and adopt the following Minutes of Council
(* *Minutes available at meeting)*:**

a) Annual General Meeting of Council - 11th May, 2016;
Amendment to Planning representation for Central and West – Councillors M. Turner; D. Howells (Reserve)

b) Ordinary Meeting of Council - 18th May, 2016;
A Member referred to an omission from the Minutes when a meeting had been requested to discuss anti-social behaviour in the vicinity of Tredegar General Hospital with the following parties: Aneurin Bevan Trust, Gwent Police and Tredegar Town Council.
c) Staffing and Finance Sub-Committee Meeting - 25th May, 2016; **
The following sentence to be moved to the opening paragraph …
The Leader referred to concerns that the Town Council was holding too much within reserves and Members would give careful consideration to such financial matters, e.g. the proposed transfer of assets.
d) Civic Meeting of Council - 1st June, 2016; ** and
e) Events Sub-Committee Meeting - 8th June, 2016: to approve the proposal to support Change Step as the designated charity for the Armed Forces Day event. **
This was agreed accordingly.

068) Matters arising from the Minutes.

- **Kidney Wales Walk for Life** – Members were reminded to return all sponsor monies
- **Defibrillators** – Members requested an update.

069) Chair to sign Minutes.
Minutes not available at meeting.

070) Correspondence.

1) BGCBC

a) Deighton Fields:
i) M. Howland – Deighton Fields – TTC can have temporary licence to occupy to allow maintenance to continue, the newly formed Tredegar Public Facilities CLG can put together a business plan for a longer term lease and by law this offered longer term lease would need a notice published in the local press.
ii) M. Howland Re: Deighton Fields – copy of proposed licence, once agreed by Council then two copies are to be signed and returned to Mr. Howland for BGCBC to sign.

On seeking legal advice, the Town Council had been advised to lease the playing field to a 'not for profit' organisation. A Member emphasised the need for an action plan in going forward and that a Business Case be drawn up. It was noted that GAVO had offered to develop a Business Plan on behalf of the Town Council for consideration.

It was agreed that the licence be signed and returned to Mark Howland to progress.

b) D. Assinder Re: Removal of Trees – will submit quote to Project Manager and get back to Council.

- Noted.

c) K. Rees Re: Notice of office move – Blaenau Gwent
Development Services staff are moving from the Blaina offices to the Civic Centre from week commencing 13.06.2016 with all staff being on Floor 1A in the Civic Centre from Monday, 20th June, 2016.

- Noted.

d) List of Licensing Applications week ending 03.06.2016.

- Noted.

2) One Voice Wales

a) Community Energy Wales update

- Noted.

b) Revised Code of Practice on workforce matters – The Two Tier Code Annual Monitoring Exercise.

- Noted.

c) National Assets Working Group: Green Growth Wales – Call for projects, June 2016.

- Noted (forwarded to Councillor O. Price).

d) Meet the Future Generations Commissioner – Butetown Community Centre between 2.00 p.m. and 4.00 p.m. on 4th July 2016.

- Noted.

e) Training:-
i) Council as an employer, Pontypool 4th July 2016.
ii) The Council Meeting, Undy 14th July 2016.

- Noted (circulate to Staffing Sub-Cttee).

f) Appointments:-
i) Heritage Lottery Fund Committee for Wales – looking for two new members with closing date 27.06.2016 – can claim daily fee of £85.00 and reasonable travel expenses.
ii) Appointment of Members to the Arts Council of Wales, closing date for applications 07.07.2016 (unremunerated).

- Noted (Councillor T. Smith, G. Meredith and R. Watkins).

3) Welsh Government

Independent Remuneration Panel – request for information on Chair/Mayor's Allowance by 30th June, 2016 to assist with a review they are undertaking for Wales.

- Noted.

4) P. Shackson

Re: Circuit of Wales Funding – answers to questions raised at the Council meeting.

- Noted, announcement awaited.

5) Tredegar Horseshow

Thanks for the sponsorship and support. Includes photo gifts for Council and the Mayor.

- Noted.

6) Party in the Park:

a) A. Latham, St. James' Mothers Union - Thanks for a wonderful afternoon.

- Noted.

b) M. Morgan, Gwent Defibbers - Thanks for a wonderful afternoon and batteries for defibs in town will be replaced today (13.06.2016).

- Noted.

7) E. Morgan

Re: Opening Doors to Blaenau Gwent's Local Studies Collection

i) Gwent Archives have agreed to be lead partner in this project.

ii) Asking for a small financial contribution towards the Opening Doors project.

- Noted, a Member explained that the Town Council had not committed to any funding at present, but enquired if the Town Council would like to make a donation to support the project, which was agreed subject to financial regulations.

Councillor B. Willis left the meeting at this juncture (8.19 p.m.)

8) D. Phillips

Asking if Council would place a link to the Tredegar Local Running Club Bryn Bach Parc website on Council's website.

- Noted.

9) E. Patrick		Re: Tredegar Crime Prevention Panel – asking if Cllr Meredith still wishes to be part of the merged Panel otherwise could Council select a representative. Next meeting 25.08.2016 with the new Crime Commissioner attending – *forwarded to Cllr Meredith* - Noted, also to be forwarded to Councillors T. Smith and M. Turner.
10) G. Jones		Re: Tredegar Business Forum – website has been launched, www.tredegarbusiness.co.uk. Information/news for the site can be sent to him for uploading.
11) J. Horton		Visit to Loftus Garden Site Village 1st July, 2016, Newport's first garden village – places for visit are limited to 2 per organisation. - Noted, check time and advise Mayor accordingly.
12) Brecon Beacons Tourism:	a)	Theatre launches friends and patrons scheme. - Noted.
	b)	New proposals for the Visitor Centre. - Noted.
13) Brecon Beacons National Park Authority	a)	Agenda for Urgent Business Committee Wednesday 22nd June, 2016 at 10.00 a.m. – *forwarded to Cllr Price* - Noted.
	b)	i) Weekly List of Planning Applications 27.05.2016 – *Forwarded to Cllr Price* ii) Weekly List of Planning Applications 03.06.2016 - *Forwarded to Cllr Price* iii) Weekly list of Planning Application 10.06.2016 – *forwarded to Cllr Price* - Noted.
14) GAVO	a)	Steps to Energy Effectiveness Seminar at Ebenezer Baptist Church Abertillery 29th June, 2016 at 10.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m., contact eryldykes@yahoo.co.uk to book a place. - Noted, forward to Councillor A. Tippings.
	b)	Zion Miners Chapel Llanhilleth – Dementia Friendly group meeting last Thursday of the month 12.30 p.m. to 3.30 p.m.

- Noted.

c) Inclusive Play Worker, closing date 24.06.2016 at 12.00 noon – paid role.

- Noted.

d) Cash 4 U Grant 2016 – purpose of grant is to encourage more young people (14-25yrs old) to volunteer in small project, closing date for applications 31.08.2016 – *forwarded to Sirhowy Woodlands.*

- Noted.

15**) PUBLICATIONS**
Roadworks report week commencing 03.06.2016 and 10.06.2016; Roadworks report week commencing 17.06.16 and update on Head of the Valley Brynmawr to Gilwern was cancelled on weekend due to poor weather conditions; Communicorp Local Councils Update June 2016 Issue 196; Brecon Beacons Tourism Newsletter June 2016.

- Noted.

16) **AGENDA**
Education, Active Living & learning Scrutiny Committee Wednesday 5th June, 2016 at 2.00 p.m. Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Ebbw Vale; Environment, Economy and Infrastructure Scrutiny Committee Tuesday, 14th June, 2016 at 2.00 p.m. Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Ebbw Vale; Social Services Scrutiny Committee Thursday, 16th June, 2016 at 10.30 a.m. Executive Room, Civic Centre, Ebbw Vale; Special Executive Tuesday, 21st June, 2016 at 9.00 a.m. Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Ebbw Vale; Joint Education, Active Living & Learning and Social Services Scrutiny Committee Wednesday, 22nd June, 2016 at 10.30 a.m. – POSTPONED; Advance notice of Special Environment, Economy and Infrastructure Scrutiny Committee Thursday, 28th July, 2016 at 2.00 p.m. Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Ebbw Vale.; Special Meeting of the Council Thursday, 23rd June, 2016 at 9.00 a.m. Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Ebbw Vale; Special Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee Wednesday, 22nd June, 2016 at 2.00 p.m. Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Ebbw Vale; Social Services Scrutiny Committee – change of venue on Thursday, 28th July, 2016 to 11.30 a.m. in Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Ebbw Vale; Advance notice of Special Education, Active Living and Learning Scrutiny Committee Thursday, 8th September, 2016, time and venue to be confirmed; Joint Education, Active Living & Learning and Social Services Scrutiny Committee Thursday, 28th July at 10.30 a.m. Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Ebbw Vale.

071) Planning:

a) To consider an Officer's Report (if received);
None received.

b) Verbal report of the Planning Committee, if any;

c) To consider Planning Applications submitted for Council's observations; and

App No	Applicant	Proposal
2016/0175	Mr. C. Hind 6 Is-Fryn, Rhymney	New dwelling and garage, land adjacent to 1 Hughes Cottage, Merthyr Road, Tredegar. Concern was expressed regarding the condition of the house, as complaints had been received by Members

No objections

d) To consider other planning matters.
2016/0103 Commemorative bench at Community Garden, Beaufort Road, Tredegar – Approved.

072) Matters of Local Interest or Concern (by prior notice).

- **2016 Concerts in the Park** – stewards were required for the remaining Concerts – Councillors B. Willis and A.E. Tippings volunteered to attend the Concert on Sunday, 17th July, 2016.

- **Mayor's Appeal** – funding was still awaited.

- **SLCC/OWV Conference – Liberty Stadium, Swansea** – feedback requested from Town Clerk, to be presented to the next meeting.

There being no other business the Meeting closed at 8.35 p.m.

_____ Chair