

TREDEGAR TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Council held remotely via Microsoft Teams on Wednesday, 16th December, 2020 at 6.30 p.m.

Present: Councillors **G. James (Chair)**
D. Jones
A.E. Tippings
D.W.A. Howells
K. Phillips
S. Rees
D. Rowberry
H. Trollope
S. Trollope
M. Turner
G. Walters
B. Willis

In attendance: Clerk – Ms. C. Price
RFO – Ms. A. Edwards

131) Apologies. Councillors E. Jones T. Smith, M. Cross, A. Jones, P. Prosser and J. Thomas

132) Declarations of Interest

The Chair reminded Members to make their declarations as and when necessary.

133) To receive verbal recommendations of all Sub-Committees / Working Party held prior to this meeting

- **Budget Working Group – 14th December, 2020**

Agreed: RFO to seek all information requested, with deadline of early January to align with budget-setting process and report back, as appropriate; which was approved accordingly.

134) To receive: update in respect of Annual Return on conclusion of 2019 / 2020 Audit

The RFO said there were no matters arising, Council having received a clear audit for 2019 / 2020; the Officer said well done to Council for meeting all requirements. The Officer confirmed the change to Audit Wales as the external auditor for this forthcoming financial year, with Councils now in receipt of the three-year audit cycle, to start this year, with a full audit being undertaken for Blaenau Gwent in 2021 / 2022. The RFO had attended a webinar that outlined the setting of the proposed process including how all information for a full audit would be collected locally by Audit Wales, e.g. Financial Regulations, Minutes, bank accounts, etc. YouTube link of the webinar was to be made available and would be

forwarded to Members.

A Member expressed an interest in receiving a copy of the audit cycle document and expressed concern in respect of the three-year cycle, as Council needed to be 'on the ball' in meeting Standing Orders / Financial Regulations. The RFO reiterated that Blaenau Gwent would be undertaken in the second year and the link from the Audit Wales webinar would be sent to all Members when it became available; Councils would still have Thematic Assertions, and should remain stringent in their accounting, i.e. receipts, Sales Ledger, copy of bank statements, etc. - Monmouth was scheduled in the first year.

In respect of accessing documents, Audit Wales would look for a local point of access to Abertillery & Llanhilleth, Brynmawr, Nantyglo & Blaina and Tredegar; a signed sheet would be provided listing documents, outlining those to be delivered / collected. A Member said this was same process as the Local Authority; Local Authority Officers had suggested Audit Wales may not have the capacity to undertake all town / community councils as would be hoped. A Member voiced his confidence in the ability of the RFO, saying this process appeared similar to that carried out for school inspections.

The RFO pointed out there were many town / community councils and that was why the audit process had been split into sections; although perhaps there could be a duplication of work that Internal Auditors would undertake. Within the webinar, it had been raised that only a few town / community councils in the minority were listed in financial reports, and that focus should be placed on those to help in raising all councils to the same standards. Audit Wales insisted, however, that all town / community councils be treated the same.

A Member said he had been impressed, since being appointed to Town Council, how transparent the financial process was, and the excellent book-keeping held by Council.

The update in respect of the Annual Return was noted and accepted by Council; this was welcomed, and thanks extended to the RFO.

135) To consider a Schedule of Accounts for payment in December 2020

The RFO referred to the report and said that bank reconciliations were available in the office for Members to view. The Officer highlighted the report was in two sections, the first section seeking approval of the sub-total; which was agreed accordingly:

- Konica Minolta – underestimated.
- Increase in price of postage stamps in January; a Member suggested Council could bulk purchase, if prudent.
- Christmas lighting; some decorations had not been working since the switch-on; a Member suggested Council could request a reduction in compensation. The RFO said all issues had been fed back to the Leader, as the point of contact, such consideration could be done when the invoice was due next month on the dismantling of the display.

The RFO provided a brief update and noted Members' comments in respect of the following, where further information was awaited:

- E.On and Ace Essentials – to be paid prior to the Christmas closure, should invoices be received.
- 'In this Together' Western Power – festive grant for low income / deprived areas to

provide selection boxes / food parcels etc. in the sum of £600.00, £200.00 awarded for each Ward.

Following a brief discussion, the following Councillors declared an interest and took no part in the decision or voting thereon: K. Phillips (Tredegar Task Force), D. Rowberry (Nantybawch) and H. Trollope (Cefn Golau).

A lengthy debate ensued regarding how to best distribute the funding allocated, taking into consideration:

- Use of existing groups, such as Cefn Golau Together, Waundeg Flats, Sirhowy Community Centre and Cymru Creations.
- Tredegar Task Force covered the wider area and funds could be distributed to the whole of Tredegar by this group.
- Consideration should be on a 'Needs Based' position, rather than equally as some areas required more support than others within Tredegar.
- Cymru Creations had received wonderful support in respect of Christmas hamper provision and supported the comments on 'Needs Based' if monies were best allocated in other areas of Tredegar.
- Monies should be allocated equally and the decision of how best to distribute funds should be decided by the groups within that Ward, who would be fully aware of those who most needed support. A Member agreed with such a split as Council would not wish to enter into 'means testing' each Ward.
- A Member raised a query in respect of donation of selection boxes to be distributed in the Sirhowy Ward and was advised this was not a matter for Council but should be referred to the appropriate organisation to respond.

On consideration of the aforementioned observations, two proposals were placed before Council, i.e.

- The full amount of £600.00 to be placed with Cymru Creations for allocation throughout the whole of Tredegar; or
- The £600.00 be allocated to four groups i.e. Cefn Golau Tenants & Residents, Cymru Creations, Sirhowy Community Centre, Waundeg Tenants & Residents, as per the decision of Council, for allocation based on need.

Upon a vote being undertaken, it was agreed that the £600.00 be split equally between the four groups for distribution (Councillors K. Phillips, D. Rowberry and H. Trollope abstained from the voting process).

- Michael Foot / Aneurin Bevan / Peter Morgan-Jones Prize awards – Councillor H. Trollope to liaise to ascertain names of the recipients.

The total for December was thereupon agreed; there being no further queries regarding the Schedule of Accounts, all presented items were approved for payment. Transfer of funds would be undertaken in the presence of the appropriate Member and Town Clerk, which was noted accordingly.

The RFO reminded Members, who had not returned their Member's Allowance Form, to please do so and advised they could email a photo of the completed form to the office if more convenient.

136) To receive and adopt the following Minutes of Council:

N.B. There were no formal meetings held September 2020

- a) Events Sub-Committee – 6th October, 2020**
- b) Budget Working Group – 15th October, 2020**
- c) Ordinary Meeting of Council – 29th October, 2020**
- d) Civic Sub-Committee – 3rd November, 2020**
- e) Performance Review Sub-Committee – 4th November, 2020**
- f) Civic Meeting of Council – 4th November, 2020**
- g) Annual General Meeting of Council – 25th November, 2020**

For information: Councillor G. Walters had received confirmation as a School Governor for Georgetown Primary, and would enquire of any CRB checks required; and, the Clerk confirmed that Councillor J. Thomas had been accepted as a School Governor for Bro Helyg, as no opposition for representation had been received from the other town / community councils in Blaenau Gwent.

“Congratulations were extended to Members of Town Council for all their work during these difficult times, which was a credit to the community.” It was emphasised that this comment referred to **ALL** Members of Town Council.

It was agreed that, for points of accuracy only, all Minutes presented be moved en bloc as a true record.

Councillor K. Phillips left the meeting at this juncture; he expressed his thanks to all Members and confirmed that Tredegar Task Force had delivered over 12,000 parcels to those in need. He wished everyone a safe and Merry Christmas

The Chair extended a personal thank you to all those who had volunteered, for the wonderful work they had done over the past year.

137) Chair to sign Minutes - at earliest opportunity in accordance with WG Legislation and Guidance

To be duly signed by the Chair, adhering to safety regulations and relevant restrictions, at the earliest opportunity – Chair to liaise accordingly.

138) Correspondence

- 1) BGCBC
 - a) M. Howland Re: Tredegar Recreation Ground. Transfer to Tredegar Sports Ground Ltd. completed 09.12.2020
 - Noted; a Member said that issues in respect of required works had been highlighted, as other interested parties had been led to believe this could not be led by the Local Authority.

Councillor B. Willis declared an interest in the following item and took no part in discussion or voting thereon.

- b) 1) List of licencing applications, week ending 27.11.2020 & 04.12.2020
 - i) Temporary events notice, sale of alcohol 19th to 24.12.2020 – Lidl’s
 - ii) Variation of Designated Premises Supervisor – The Queen Vic.
- 2) List of licencing applications, week ending 11.12.2020
 - Noted.

- 2) One Voice Wales
 - a) i) Important Grant funding opportunity for community and town councils: volunteering recovery grant – forwarded to top four for comment
 - ii) Volunteering Recovery grant: FAQs
 - Noted; forward to Councillor G. James.
 - b) New data for Understanding Welsh Places website.
 - Noted; forward to all Members via email.
 - c) Save a Life Cymru: OVW and Save a Life Cymru are working together to encourage communities across Wales to understand the importance of learning CPR and using a defibrillator.
 - Noted.

Councillor G. James declared an interest in the following and took no part in discussion or voting thereon

- 3) P. Davies
 - Friends of Bedwellty Park Re: Sensory Garden Seating. Asking Council to consider sponsoring one of the seats for the Sensory Garden. “Whilst we have no costings available yet, your consideration of our request, in principle, would be appreciated.”
 - A Member suggested the group could apply through the grant application process; however, Members suggested that Council could agree in principle but would be unable to reach a decision until more information was received.

- 4) RFCA
 - Silver Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Awards 2021: Applications open early 2021, virtual workshop 14.01.2021.
 - Noted; all Members were invited to participate and to liaise with the Clerk if wishing to attend.

- 5) Aneurin Bevan University Health Board
- a) K. Cross Re: Integrated Wellbeing Network meeting notice Thursday 04.03.2021 at 10.00 a.m. via MS Teams
 - b) K. Cross Re: Mental Health Foundation Tier, Connect Five training. Free training.
- Noted.

6) PUBLICATIONS

One Voice Wales, Ministerial Advisory Forum on Ageing: Age Cymru, Age Matters newsletter, Autumn Edition; Myanmar Embassy Christmas card; Notes and information from Integrated Wellbeing Network collaborative meeting; One Voice Wales Merry Christmas.

– ***distributed to Members***: Received.

7) AGENDA

None received.

Councillor B. Willis declared an interest in the following item and took no part in discussion or voting thereon.

139) Planning:

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

b) Verbal report of the Planning Committee, if any

- i) List of planning applications received in week 48

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

App. No.	Applicant	Proposal
C/2020/0282	Mr. D. Richards Shaw Healthcare 1 Links Court Links Business Park St. Mellon's, Cardiff	5-bedroom supported living unit and associated works - Maes y Dderwen, Charles Street, Tredegar

One Member raised the following:

No objections to the principle just some observations on the location, i.e. the location on the boundary close to the road created a narrow alleyway between the proposal and the adjacent pub. This was likely to attract antisocial behaviour. Could the building be set back further, or closer to the existing building to avoid this; if it could not, then appropriate lighting would be required.

All other buildings were facing the road, rather than being end on, also the majority of buildings (Building line) on that side of the road were set back further.

Finally, with the additional parking spaces that would be required, were there sufficient parking spaces on site.

Additional feedback:

A Member, in a Local Authority / Town Council dual role, had requested this be considered through the Committee process and spoken against the proposal, outlining concerns, e.g. complaints from residents; issues with litter / discarded cigarette ends; planning grounds re. parking.

Members therefore **objected** to the proposed development on planning considerations in respect of parking, as the building was full to maximum capacity and already experienced issues with parking, which impacted on Charles Street and Church Street, and this would be further exacerbated.

Objection: insufficient parking.

C/2020/0287	Mr. M. Harris Nag's Head Merthyr Road Tredegar	New House build, garden of Nag's Head, Merthyr Road, Tredegar
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Observation: sad to lose the beer garden, especially as 'outside areas' have been business critical in recent times; however, other than parking issues that may arise, no reasons to object to the proposal. **No objections.**

d) To consider other planning matters

- Notice of Planning Appeal for 19 Railway View. 19 Railway View; Noted.
- Solar Panels: Tredegar Town Council had been opposed to the solar farm application, Planning Wales had also been opposed; unfortunately, Ministers had overturned the decision and awarded costs to be paid by BGCBC.

A Member explained, for clarity, the initial application for a solar farm was referred to Julie James, M.S., and the decision of the Local Authority overturned, and the permission granted. Part of the reasoning was that the Minister did not consider thirty years as a very long period and she considered granting permission was the right decision.

An application then came back to the Planning Committee and, although the company had not yet started work, asked for a ten-year extension, now spanning forty years. Planning Members were not happy for the thirty-year period, and therefore forty, and refused. This matter was then referred back to the Minister, who overturned the decision of the Local Authority again for forty years, and that was why expenses were levied as the Minister considered permission should have been granted.

140) Matters of Local Interest or Concern (by prior notice)

- **Defibrillator – Mountain Air Inn** – in response to a question raised, the Clerk confirmed that the defibrillator had been presented to Mountain Air Inn representatives at the Council's award presentation evening in March 2020. The Clerk had liaised with the Chair of Gwent Defibbers to ascertain if training could be provided but unfortunately Covid-19 restrictions had prevented this being undertaken. The Officer had again liaised with the Chair who would be willing to provide training via remote access if deemed sufficient. However, following a brief discussion, it was

considered that hands on training should be provided for users to be adequately trained, also, to cover any legal implications for individuals involved.

However, it was highlighted that access to defibrillators was promoted on the Ambulance website and anyone in need would be directed to the nearest provision in the case of an emergency.

- **Highways issues associated with development of new Wellbeing Centre** – a Member expressed serious concern in respect of increasing problems with parking in respect of the Wellbeing Centre development impacting on the surrounding area. He had been in contact with a Local Authority Officer in respect of enforcement and, at meetings held to discuss the Wellbeing Centre, residents had been assured parking would not be an issue. The parking issues were escalating with visitors to the surgery parking on bends, both sides of the road, and with vehicles for the development entering / exiting Park Row.

The Member had requested a site meeting be held with Officers of the Highways Department to discuss these issues but, to date, had received no response to his emails. Members supported these concerns and believed that Covid restrictions should not prevent such action progressing.

The Clerk confirmed that she had also emailed the Highways Department, as requested, to seek a date / time for a site meeting to be held.

- **Office arrangements over the Christmas period** – the Clerk referred to the office closure over the Christmas period, outlining when the House would be open for the Registrar provision, and confirming both members of staff had sufficient holidays remaining if the Council wished to close the office end of day, Tuesday, 22nd December, 2020 to return Monday, 4th January, 2021; which was agreed accordingly.

The Chair extended wishes to Members and staff for a Happy Christmas and safe New Year

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 8.20 p.m.

_____ Chair