

TREDEGAR TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Council held via Microsoft Teams / hybrid
on Wednesday, 20th March, 2024 at 6.30 p.m.

Present: Councillors K. Phillips (Chair)
M. Turner
A.E. Tippings
E. Jones
S. Mavar
M. Moore
D. Rowberry
J. Thomas
K. Waldron
G. Walters

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

355) Apologies. Councillors G. Badham, A.E. Evans, A. Jones, B. Rees,
H. Trollope, S. Trollope and C. Walters

356) Declarations of Interest

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

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

It was agreed the recommendations of the following Sub-Committees held prior to Council be approved accordingly:

- **Civic Sub-Committee (1.00 p.m.) – 20th March, 2024**
 - Cefn Golau Together:*** as this was the first invite, the applicant be given another opportunity to attend and the invite to be forwarded by post.
 - Made in Tredegar:*** the decision on the application be deferred, subject to representatives attending a meeting to discuss the application.
 - Tredegar Veterans' Support Hub:*** a start-up grant of £100.00 be recommended to Council for approval.
 - Tredegar Women's Cricket Club:*** a start-up grant of £100.00 be recommended to Council for approval.
 - Tredegar HM Armed Forces Veterans' Group:*** as the Group had failed to attend to present their application on three separate occasions, the grant application be **REFUSED**.

- **Policy Sub-Committee (5.30 p.m.) – 20th March, 2024**

The review of all policies placed before the Policy Sub-Committee, as reported by Officers, be unanimously recommended for approval subject to the foregoing amendments:

Risk Management Policy

Amend Severity Score 'Loss of petty cash held by office' and 'Non recording of cash payments' and, 'Grounds Contract – SLAs'.

Standing Orders

No amendments: Clerk to review and bring back for Members' consideration.

Internal Financial Controls

Amendments

Page 3 Processing of Salaries "... in a written format i.e. letter / email / **spreadsheet**, with a copy of these notified changes filed. The letter / email / **spreadsheet** must specify the necessary change and the date from which it is to take place from."

Timesheets, Bullet Point 2 "**All** wages are salaried."

Bullet Point 4 "Overtime: Listed on a separated overtime form **or printed email** specifying officer ..."

"R.F.O. uploads basic payroll data ... (Member signed overtime sheet **or printed approval email** must be produced ...".

Page 6 "Schedule of Payments ... cheque number / **payment method** / cheque amount, ..."

Page 7 deletion of the following:

~~Senior Members of Council meet with the Internal Auditor prior to commencing the audit to discuss the potential scope of the audit.~~

~~A letter of engagement is to be sent to the Internal Auditor stating the scope of the audit and the agreed fee.~~

"**If required**, periodic visits by **the** Internal Auditor **will be** arranged to verify the assurances specified in the Annual Return, ..."

Financial Regulations

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These Financial Regulations were adopted by the Council at its Meeting held on 15th February 2023 and revised at the meeting held ~~15th February 2023~~ **20th March 2024**.

3.3 The RFO shall provide the Council with a quarterly statement of receipts and payments to date under each head of the budgets, comparing actual expenditure against that planned. **It shall include an explanation of material variances, for this purpose, "material" shall be in excess of [£100] or [15%] of the budget.**

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8 PUBLIC CONVENIENCES

8.1 Council's agreed course of action for any emergency repair works is:

- Maximum spend per repair capped at £500.00p.
- Plumbing contractor is – ~~A B Technical Services~~ **Tender with an SLA to be put in place.**
- Electrical contractor is – ~~A B Technical Services for minor works, within the scope of their qualification~~ **Tender with an SLA to be put in place.**
- Contractors are to be appointed at the first meeting following the AM of Council.

Pension Policy

No amendments

Budget Preparation Timeline

Approved.

358) To consider a Schedule of Accounts for payment in March 2024

The RFO spoke to the report and explained that the bank reconciliations, valid to date, were available for Members to view upon request, which was noted accordingly. The Officer explained that this was the final Schedule of Payments for the financial year, there were revised payments for ratification of Council for February 2024 and also sought provisional approval of anticipated payments, for which if no invoices were received or agreed by Council (i.e. items agendaed under 'Correspondence'), cheques would not be written.

- The RFO reported two overspends within the Budget Against Actual, 1) £192.00 Employers Pension, proposed a virement from Gross Salaries, and 2) £193.00 Town Clock maintenance, proposed a virement from Garden Surround, both of which were approved unanimously.
- Disappointment was expressed that the External Audit 2022 / 2023 remained outstanding despite TTC meeting all deadlines for submission. The External Auditor for Audit Wales had forwarded an email to appropriate parties outlining that no correspondence was to be received for this financial year 2023 / 2024 and there would be a charge levied on councils for any such correspondence.

Council was still not in receipt of the 2022 / 2023 full accounts, which had yet to be returned from the External Auditors; with the exception of one town / community council, the RFO believed this to be the case for all town / community councils in Blaenau Gwent, which remained outstanding.

When the RFO had sought an update from Audit Wales, the Officer had been informed this was due to workload and staffing capacity; all accounts had to be signed off by the appropriate External Auditor. A Member could understand there could be delays but said Council should be made aware of the reason; the RFO said that the reason suggested the workload was too much for one individual, however if the External Auditor requested information a response was expected within seven days or the council would be subject to penalties.

- The statement in respect of the Christmas Lights electric usage had not been received and therefore could not be made during the current financial year. On the RFO querying the matter, the Officer had been informed this was due to a changeover of a new accounting system; and
The Solicitor's invoice for the lease of Deighton playing field and Sirhowy Community Garden remained outstanding, as they were awaiting confirmation from Blaenau Gwent CBC.

These costs would be rolled into the next financial year.

- The following projects would be undertaken in the next financial year: Honours board, promotional TV, TTC website and Memorial gates, for which two quotes had been received, for a start April / May, and a Finance and Staffing Sub-Committee would be convened for due consideration.
- Finally, now more accurate information was available, the RFO suggested a change to Earmarked Reserves in respect of Green Spaces £13,500, i.e. increase to meet costs

of £13,906 covering two years. Council agreed an increased Earmarked Reserve of £14,000 accordingly.

There being no further queries regarding the Schedule of Accounts, presented items were approved for payment. The RFO asked that the designated signatories liaise in respect of the transfer of funds, as approved by Council, to be undertaken in the presence of the appropriate Member and Town Clerk, which was noted accordingly.

The Schedule of Accounts was approved for payment, inclusive of amendments to the February 2024 Schedule, and provisional payments resulting from decisions arising from Ordinary Meeting of Council.

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

- a) Special Meeting of Council - 31st January, 2024**
- b) Finance and Staffing Sub-Committee - 5th February, 2024**
- c) Events Sub-Committee - 7th February, 2024**
- d) Civic Meeting of Council - 7th February, 2024**
- e) Ordinary Meeting of Council - 21st February, 2024**

It was agreed that all Minutes presented be moved as a true record, subject to a minor amendment on Special Meeting of Council (page 187), as approved by Council.

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

Minutes approved were duly signed by the Chair in the presence of Council.

361) Correspondence

- 1) BGCBC
D. Arnold Re: Message from the Lord Lieutenant. Request for Councils' support in maximising the potential of the British Honours system, deadline is 22.03.2024.

- Noted.
- 2) One Voice Wales
Annual Membership renewal April 2024 £3,004 - **Approval required**

- Council questioned whether this membership provided value for money but recognised this was a unique service for town / community councils; it was unanimously agreed the expenditure be approved accordingly.
- 3) ABUHB
C. Frame Re: Stained Glass windows, Tredegar Health Centre. Confirmed now removed and safely stored at Bedwellty House.

- Noted.

4) Cllr Tippings

Re: Deighton. Has secured a free bench. ***Cllr Tippings to give update.***

- Noted. KWT had offered to provide a chunky plastic bench for Deighton playing field, which Council had received. The Clerk had made arrangements for receipt of delivery by Deighton Primary School. KWT had also offered to help in affixing the bench in place, which Council gratefully accepted.

5) Malcolm Moon
Electrical

Update: Confirming flood lights have been removed and sent away for testing. Lighting circuits removed from fuseboard and electrics reset, video of how to "trip reset" has been given to our office. Clock not working appears to be an issue with clock face / mechanism – *Smith of Derby have been requested to recall.* No quote received yet for rewire / install of a split lighting circuit board in the Clock and no install date available for the external defibrillator cabinet.

- Noted. Smith of Derby had undertaken the annual service however the Clock was still not working; therefore the electrician had offered to attend on site when Smith of Derby returned to ascertain the issue.

6) Financial Matters:

a) National Eisteddfod Re: Eisteddfod Rhondda Cynon Taff 2024. Request for a donation.

- Noted; Clerk to respond that Council felt unable to support the request due to restricted funds for the area and therefore declined to contribute.

b) Ty Hafan Re: Our Big Ambition project. Requesting a donation.

- Noted; a donation of £200.00 was unanimously approved.

6) **PUBLICATIONS**

BGCBC Roadworks report, week ending 15.03.2024 and 22.03.2024;
Blaenau Gwent Heritage Forum Agenda for meeting 18.03.2024 at 10.00 a.m.
Tredegar Library – ***distributed to Members:*** Received.

Councillors E. Jones, D. Rowberry and J. Thomas declared an interest in the following item and took no part in discussion or voting thereon.

362) Planning:

- a) i) List of planning applications received in week 10
- ii) List of planning applications received in week 11

b) To consider Planning Applications submitted for Council's observations – None received.

c) To consider other planning matters – Noted:

- i. BGCBC, Notification of Planning Appeal C/2023/0129 Storage building at Unit G, Crown Business Park.
- ii. PEDW Re: DNS 3239121 Manmoel Wind, update to Hearing arrangements. 20.3.2024 Hearing session cancelled, 27.03.2024 Hearing session will proceed as planned.

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

- Deighton playing field – a Member referred to the gentleman living opposite the playing field who had raised concerns regarding dogs exercising on the pitch. This had been passed on to Blaenau Gwent CBC, who would try to send the Dog Wardens; unfortunately this practise was generally before 9.00 a.m. and after 5.00 p.m., so the Member had asked if visits could be flexible.

In respect of car registration numbers, and asking the DVLA for details of car owners: information could be shared if prosecuting dog fouling, but not for breaking byelaws of prohibiting exercising an animal.

The Leader had spoken with the gentleman and referred him to Police, if being intimidated in any way. With a view to gaining evidence, a CCTV camera could be placed on the lamppost outside his property. Council was informed of one resident of the adjoining properties to the playing field, who regularly let her labrador onto the pitch, however there were also issues with people driving there.

It had been highlighted that Council were doing their best to prevent access to the pitch for animals. It was suggested that perhaps youngsters of local groups / schools could design posters for Council to attach to the fencing highlighting the prohibition of exercising of animals / dog fouling.

- OAP building, Beaufort Road – this was recently being used as a boxing gym and Members had been informed this building had a Covenant upon it. Council said that there was a need to find out 'gifted properties' throughout the Tredegar area from BGCBC Legal Department. Unfortunately, one Town Councillor had been subjected to abuse on social media due to ongoing issues in respect of the building. The Leader had been given to understand that Planning Officers of BGCBC had been unable to access building on visiting.

A Member said the boxing club had contacted her and stated the Club had a letter evidencing that this building had been 'gifted' to the Club and was now owned outright.

Members suggested Archives could provide clarity as to the legal aspect, as to properties 'gifted' to the people of Tredegar and such covenants in place.

The Chair had experienced a similar situation with the Little Theatre, whereby Trustees had passed away and relatives were not even aware of obligations. A Member referred to Nantyburch Senior Citizens, now Venue 2 Kidz R Us, as the only remaining Trustee. The building had been gifted to the people, which could be leased for designated use only, could not be sold on, and had to be passed back to the County Borough. Such use could be revoked if conditions were not adhered to.

It was suggested Council err on the side of caution when dealing with the senior citizens hall; apparently Clauses in place had not previously allowed young people within the building.

In respect of a query as to who had authority to 'gift', a Member suggested Council may be able to obtain the history from the Land Registry at a cost of £30.00 per request.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 7.36 p.m.

_____ Chair