

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF PONTYPOOL COMMUNITY COUNCIL
HELD REMOTELY USING MICROSOFT TEAMS
ON WEDNESDAY 26TH MAY 2021 AT 6.30PM

In attendance:

Councillor: Giles Davies (in the Chair)

and Councillors: Elaine Chilcott JP, Lynda Clarkson, Matthew Ford, Elizabeth Hunt, Keith James, Gaynor James, Nicholas Jones, John Killick, Adrian Lang, Richard Overton and Norma Parrish

Officers: Ruth Tucker (Clerk), Richard Gwinnell (Acting Clerk) and Olivia Williams (Youth Worker)

Absent: Councillors Nick Byrne, Janet Jones, Rose Matthews, Ben Rapier, Nick Simons, Barry Taylor JP and Jackie Taylor

16. **Questions from the Public**

No questions had been received from the public.

17. **Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Nick Byrne, Janet Jones, Rose Matthews, Ben Rapier, Nick Simons, Barry Taylor and Jackie Taylor.

The Acting Clerk explained, in answer to questions, that there was no need to accept apologies; only to receive them, as they were a matter of fact. If members gave reasons why they could not attend, these should not be discussed in public, as those reasons could be personally sensitive. Members were obliged to attend meetings and, if they had not done so for six months, the Council (before the six months ended) would need to consider their reasons for absence (or else that person would cease to be a member of the Council). Any such requests would be handled sensitively, at the time.

18. **Declarations of Interest**

Councillors Lynda Clarkson, Giles Davies, Gaynor James, Nicholas Jones, John Killick, Richard Overton and Norma Parrish declared personal and non-prejudicial interests in any agenda items relating to Torfaen County Borough

Council (TCBC) as they were members of TBCBC, as well as being members of Pontypool Community Council.

19. **Minutes of the Council meeting – 28 April 2021**

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 28 April 2021 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

20. **Minutes of the Annual Council Meeting – 12 May 2021**

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the annual Council meeting held on 12 May 2021 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

Councillor Matthew Ford entered the meeting at this point.

21. **Planning Applications**

Members received and considered Torfaen County Borough Council Planning Applications.

RESOLVED: that the observations (or absence of observations, as the case may be) outlined in the appendix attached to these minutes be submitted to Torfaen County Borough Council.

AA/CP

Councillor Keith James entered the meeting during the discussion of the planning applications (after item 5).

22. **Events Committee (and Planning and Environment Committee)**

Councillor Richard Overton asked to serve on the Events Committee and on the Planning and Environment Committee.

RESOLVED: that Councillor Richard Overton be appointed to serve on the Events Committee and the Planning and Environment Committee for the remainder of the civic year.

23. **Resignation**

Members were informed of the recent resignation of Councillor Kay Arthur. The Acting Clerk explained that a notice of vacancy would be issued shortly, enabling ten members of the public to petition for an election to the

vacant seat. This was necessary as the next normal elections were more than 11 months in the future. If the elections were 6 months or less away, the vacancy could be held over until those next ordinary elections.

RESOLVED: that the resignation and process be noted.

24. **Vacancy – New Inn Upper**

The Clerk explained that this vacancy had existed for more than a year and that it had been advertised, but no call for an election had been received. The Council had subsequently advertised for anyone interested in being co-opted onto the Council, but again no application had been received and no names had been put forward. The Council had an obligation to co-opt a member but could not do so if no-one came forward for co-option.

Members acknowledged that the Council had done all it could to fill the vacancy, as required by law. It was felt that, with ordinary elections only 11 months away, the vacancy should not be re-advertised and it should be accepted that the seat would remain vacant, pending those elections, unless someone expressed an interest in being co-opted onto the Council before November. This would result in a small saving (of members' expenses).

RESOLVED: that the position be noted and the vacancy not be re-advertised for co-option.

25. **One Voice Wales Gwent Area Valleys Committee**

The Deputy Leader of the Council (Councillor Killick) referred to the presentation from Veronika Brannovic, the Local Nature Partnership Officer for Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen. He was enthused by her project to plant wild flowers on local canal banks and suggested that this Council and Cwmbran Community Council may wish to work together on a joint project, promoting wildflower planting, linking the two areas, alongside the canal, as this would help work together with Cwmbran to promote regeneration of the canal in a wider sense. He suggested and other members concurred that Veronika Brannovic should be invited to a meeting of the Council (possibly with Cwmbran Community Council members) to hear more about the project and consider it in the local context.

RESOLVED: (1) that the minutes of the One Voice Wales Gwent Valleys Area Committee held on 20 April 2021 be noted and
(2) that the Clerk invite Veronika Brannovic to a Council meeting, to make a presentation about her local canalside wildflower planting project and
(3) that the Clerk make enquiries about holding a meeting with Cwmbran Community Council too on this issue.

RT/RG

RT/RG

26. **One Voice Wales/Society of Local Council Clerks Conference**

The Deputy Leader thanked the Acting Clerk for the notes of the conference and referred to key highlights. He had attended the conference virtually with the Acting Clerk, at a cost of £45 each, which was very good value for money, given the number of high-profile speakers and the knowledge gained. The key messages in the report would be very useful to inform the agenda of the working group which had been appointed by the Council on 28 April. It was not possible to circulate the presentations from the day, as One Voice Wales did not allow this, but it would be useful to obtain copies of the national toolkits referred to on the day.

Other members asked about progress with setting up meetings of the working group and whether it would be possible to seek Welsh Government funding for “the Owl” (the device used to enable people to fully access remote meetings) retrospectively.

The Acting Clerk advised that he would seek copies of the toolkits (he did not know whether these came at a cost) and that arranging the first meeting of the working group was on his list of things to do as soon as possible.

RESOLVED: (1) that the report from the conference be noted
(2) that the Acting Clerk seek copies of the toolkits referred to as soon as possible
(3) that the Acting Clerk arrange the first meeting of the member working group as soon as possible and
(4) that the possibility of applying for retrospective Welsh Government funding to pay for “the Owl” be explored.

RG

RG

RG

27. **EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**
By virtue of The Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the press and public are excluded from discussions on the following items on the basis that disclosure thereof would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.
28. **Confidential minutes – Council – 26 May 2021**
RESOLVED: that the confidential minutes of the Council meeting held on 26 May 2021 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

Signed by the Chair: