

TREDEGAR TOWN COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Council held in the Council Chamber,
Bedwellty House on Wednesday, 21st June, 2017 at 6.30 p.m.**

Present: Councillors H. Trollope (Chair)

**T. Smith
A. Jones
E. Jones
D. Rowberry
S. Trollope
M. Turner
P. Waldron
B.G. Willis**

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

By invitation: Internal Auditor, Mr. S. Bees

057) Apologies. Councillors J. Thomas, A.E. Tippings, T. Gregory, D.W.A. Howells, G. James, D. Jones (*attending his last Head of Year meeting prior to retirement*) and G. Meredith

058) Declarations of Interest.

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

059) 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.

060) To receive:

a) report of the Internal Auditor;

The Chair extended a welcome to the Internal Auditor, who was in attendance to present his report for the Internal Audit for the year 2016/2017.

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, 2017.

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 agreed with the RFO, and supporting documentation had been examined.

The internal Auditor outlined changes to the audit for 2016/2017, i.e.

- Guidance issued by Welsh Government 'Accounts and Audit (Wales)' Regulations 2014
- Requirement that the Council's annual accounting statement must be approved – *this approval process had already been implemented by the RFO as best practice*
- Modified audit arrangements for local councils, with greater focus on governance and public reporting in the future, and the Annual Governance Statement being extended to include an additional section (Part 2)
- Part 2 would focus on two new thematic assurances; 1) Payroll Management arrangements, and 2) application of Revised Members Code of Conduct
- Confirmation of these 2016/2017 assurances were not circulated until late February 2017 to local councils
- The Annual Return 2015/2016 was certified with a clear opinion by External Auditors, which represented a commendable performance (two minor 'Issues Arising' i.e. rounding errors of £1.00 and a technical matter regarding petty cash had been addressed by the RFO).

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; (*subject to Thematic Review*)

- 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 referred to the control objectives and issues arising, and invited Members to respond on these matters, and also the content of the report:

- Internal Financial Controls – review and approval of the Policy, deferred previously, was needed;
- Mayoral Chain – concerns in respect of lack of specific details outlined in the invoice for cost of work undertaken for repair; no evidence that the Council was aware of the total cost prior to receipt of said invoice, and, no official written order placed – consequently, this appeared to be a breach of Financial Regulations and Council would be unable to demonstrate value for money on this occasion.

Councillor M. Turner joined the meeting at this juncture (6.45 p.m.).

In response to a statement that the Chain would have to be transported to Birmingham to ascertain a price, the RFO explained that the company, consequently agreed, could have emailed the cost prior to undertaking the repair work.

The Leader explained that Council had approved a review of the Chain to be undertaken every May and the agreed company would now have an understanding of the cost to be incurred, but would have been unable to provide a guarantee in the first instance. An annual check would therefore be carried out prior to the Annual General Meeting of Council. The Internal Auditor acknowledged the Leader's comments but considered it would be difficult to evidence the urgency for the way this had been undertaken and, although not illegal, was contrary to the Council's own Financial Regulations.

- Retrospective approval 'Defibrillators' and Delegated Authority under Financial Regulation 'urgent repair or other work' – the Internal Auditor noted waiver had been approved retrospectively and advised Council should be mindful that this process be implemented only on limited occasions to safeguard and maintain the integrity of their financial governance arrangements. The Chair suggested that a written Proforma could be devised to evidence the process, for example who had been contacted in authorising such work, which could be forwarded to the Internal Auditor for his observations; the Internal Auditor agreed this was a sound suggestion for good practice.
- The Internal Auditor commended the RFO on the excellent performance in respect of VAT properly accounted for and promptly claimed from HMRC, which had been submitted one month earlier than the official submission date.
- Awarding of Grants – it was agreed that **ALL** applicants be requested to complete a grant application form and letters of application no longer be accepted.

- Mayor's Appeal Policy – the Town Council had agreed to hold and distribute funds raised for charity (such as Kidney Wales Foundation / Armed Forces) separately through the bank account for the Mayor's Appeal, rather than the main Town Council bank account, as a result of potential risks identified by the RFO.
- Contribution to Churches / Chapels – there were issues subject to discussion on the legality of this practice and powers available under S.137 of the LGA 1972. Council confirmed that no grants had been allocated to meet expenditure occurred in respect of religion but grants were awarded for non-religious activities of benefit to the community as a whole. The Internal Auditor advised that, when submitting applications, the church / chapel should emphasise the community activities within that building.
- Devolved Services – the Council should apply due diligence in respect of allocating contingency funding within reserves and the Internal Auditor recommended this be reviewed on a quarterly basis; the Council would need to ensure a sound business case was in place before taking control of such projects. The Chair provided an example of internal controls whereby the responsibility of the Finance and Staffing Sub-Committee had been split to two Chairs to effectively manage the workload.
- Detailed analysis of payrolls – following his analysis, the Internal Auditor thereupon outlined a number of outstanding issues in respect of the Council's pay point system, as specified in the NJC National Salary Award, approved by Council. The Chair thereupon provided detailed background information in respect of actions taken by Council in respect of addressing this outstanding issue, with a view to resolving the matter as soon as possible. The Internal Auditor acknowledged Members' comments, advising that reaching a satisfactory conclusion without further delay would be in the best interest of Council to ensure the Council itself was not exposed to a risk.
- Investment in locally based credit unions – this had proven successful for other town councils, however on a cautionary note, investment of a wider role or general banking facilities were unlikely to have the same level of coverage as banks, however reputable an organisation. Members confirmed that Council had considered support of credit unions in a nominal role, e.g. investment of grant monies awarded by Council. Another Member also highlighted that, taking advice of the previous year, Council had considered this prudent in the consideration of not financially "putting all eggs in one basket".

The Chair thereupon enquired, taking into consideration proposed change in Local Government, the risk to town/community councils in respect of funding and continuation of services in combining with a 'failing' council.

The Internal Auditor had taken part in a WAO Webinar, as had the RFO for their Town Council, with invited representatives of OVW and the SLCC, inviting councils to subscribe and submit questions in advance of the webinar; which he had done. Whilst the OVW and SLCC had been unable to commit in their responses, Mr. Anthony Barrett - Assistant Auditor General, Wales Audit Office, had considered that it would be difficult for town / community councils to protect established reserves on amalgamation; however, it would be prudent for such councils to earmark reserves for specific projects. Also, in respect of political / technical issues, a fixed amount could be set aside for recognised areas of concern, e.g. advice on a Trust Fund or safeguarding with a legal trustee.

In respect of a question raised regarding the level of Reserves retained by the Town Council, the Internal Auditor confirmed this amount was not abnormal, and comparable with

neighbouring town / community councils, and evidenced pure prudence in monies set aside for transference of services and project commitments. He confirmed that residual General Reserves were well within parameters set out in relevant Guidance.

The Internal Auditor thereupon outlined his conclusions in respect of the statutory Internal Audit Report and the requirements thereof. He expressed his gratification to the RFO and Clerk for their full co-operation throughout the audit, and the assistance provided in respect of supplying any documents and / or information required.

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

The Chair extended a vote of thanks to the Internal Auditor for his honest and frank appraisal, and for attending to present a most comprehensive report; Mr. Stuart Bees thereupon left the meeting.

b) Internal Audit 2016/2017: to undertake a review of the Internal Audit Process for the year ended 2016/2017;

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, would undertake his assessment on being appointed; the Officer confirmed he had been very thorough in this process. The RFO advised that other Town Councils 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 2015/2016

- Council's comments were "The Internal Auditor thereupon presented a summary of recommendations for approval, which were agreed accordingly The Chair thanked the Internal Auditor for attending to present a most comprehensive 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 2016/2017: 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; and,
 - the internal audit added value to the Council's governance arrangements and represented value for money

External Auditor

- There were no reports from the External Auditor regarding the internal work covered – only two minor issues raised and resolved, as outlined in the report of the Internal Auditor

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 2016/2017; 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, 2017; the RFO confirmed these had been met

Members thereupon expressed their thanks to the RFO for her work, and also expressed appreciation to the Internal Auditor, Mr. S. Bees. The RFO confirmed that the appropriate letter would be sent to Mr. Bees, on approval, confirming his re-appointment at the AGM as Internal Auditor.

c) verbal recommendations of Performance Sub-Committee; and

The following recommendations arising from the Performance Review were reported for consideration, and approved accordingly.

- final Budget against Actual for the financial year ended 31st March, 2017
- Year End Accounts
- Reserves as at 31st March, 2017

d) confirm the Annual Accounts and Return for 2016/2017, prior to External Audit

The RFO read parts 1 – 9 of the Annual Governance Statement; Parts 1 – 8 were agreed as 'Yes' and No. 9 as 'not applicable'. The Officer thereupon read statements 1 – 3 on Annual Governance Part 2 and these also were agreed as 'Yes'.

Members of the Council agreed, to approve by resolution, to submit the Annual Return to the External Auditor.

061) To re-open the Meeting to the Public

Moved, the meeting was re-opened to the public.

062) Grants:

(Approval required for payment as part of this month's Schedule of Payments.)

Consideration was given to the receipt, consideration *and approval* of grants at each Civic Meeting of Council, thus preventing the need for grants to be represented again at Ordinary Council; this was agreed accordingly.

a) to consider and approve grants to Sporting and Cultural organisations.

Mini Movers – Recommendation of start-up grant £100.00; **Approved.**

Friends of Tiggy's – Agreed insufficient information available on which to base a decision; write to inform them of this and that all applications are reviewed on their individual merit. Welcome to apply in the future if they still wish so; **Agreed.**

Tredegar County Club & Institute – Write to inform them that unable to offer financial assistance as no direct community benefit was identifiable. Welcome to reapply in the future if use of the property incorporated community groups/activities; **Agreed.**

Bedwellty Park Ladies Bowls – Recommendation of £200.00; **Approved.**

Blaenau Gwent Heritage Forum - Recommendation of £200.00; **Approved.**

Parchment Class – Recommendation of £100.00; **Approved.**

Re-Liance Bus Preservation Group – Recommendation of £200.00; **Approved.**

St. John Ambulance, Tredegar Branch – Recommendation, in principal, of £500.00. This amount minus any invoices paid for services at events (during this financial year) is to be paid in January; **Agreed.**

Tredegar Angling Club – Recommendation of £200.00; **Approved.**

Tredegar Decoupage Group – Recommendation of £100.00; **Approved.**

Tredegar Gardeners Club – Recommendation of £200.00; **Approved.**

Tredegar Quilting Class – Recommendation of £200.00; **Approved.**

Ystrad Deri Community Centre – Recommendation of £200.00; **Approved.**

b) Churches & Chapels (s.137) to consider and approve grants to Churches and Chapels

Tredegar Methodist Church - Request for financial assistance to be used towards the updating of their sound system - *Recommendation of £225.00 at Civic Meeting but Grants had changed to £300.00 as of April 2017 therefore Council asked to approve £300.00; **Approved - £300.00.***

063) Accounts: to consider a Schedule of Accounts for payment in June 2017

The RFO spoke to the report and explained that the bank reconciliations were available for Members to view.

- **Elite contract** – requested that RFO check to ascertain if contracted employee was included on insurance to use landscape equipment, such as a strimmer. A Member considered that the strimmer purchased was not 'fit for purpose', being domestic rather than industrial, whereupon it was agreed that the Clerk pursue the Returns Policy and proceed accordingly.
- **Attic Web** – the RFO explained that, unfortunately, she was unable to allocate additional time to launch the new site at present due to current workload. Photographs were needed to make the website 'live' and she invited Members to assist in order to progress. The Leader confirmed that he wished to be allocated access / user privileges to the website.

There being no further queries regarding the Schedule of Accounts, all presented items were approved for payment.

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

- a) Ordinary Meeting of Council - 19th April, 2017;**

- b) Annual General Meeting of Council - 17th May, 2017;
- c) Events Sub-Committee - 24th May, 2017;
- d) Civic Sub-Committee - 7th June, 2017;
- e) Civic Meeting of Council - 7th June, 2017

It was agreed that all Minutes presented be moved en bloc as a true record, with any matters arising to follow.

065) Matters arising from the Minutes

Ordinary Meeting of Council - 19th April, 2017

- Allotments Sub-Committee – meeting required.

Annual General Meeting of Council - 17th May, 2017

- Civic Sub-Committee – a Member enquired regarding the change of Chairmanship, the Leader explained that Council had agreed for a change in Member's roles and responsibilities.

Events Sub-Committee - 24th May 2017

- Band Concerts – concerns over posters as Town Council sponsorship was not visible; concerns also raised in respect of Town Council continuing as lead organisation of the Armed Forces Day event. Publicity Sub-Committee needed to discuss: noticeboards, website, digital sign advertising, etc.

Civic Meeting of Council - 7th June, 2017

- C/2017/0150 Planning Application 7 The Circle / 40 Castle Street – a Member suggested that only a datum level would evidence the level raised to the roof.

066) Chair to sign Minutes

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

067) Correspondence

- 1) BGCBC
- a) i) Full review of Local Development Plan commenced in November 2016, a prepared Discussion Paper is attached setting out a number of key trends and issues. Consultation responses must be received by 5.00 p.m. on 06.07.2017. Invitation to a Stakeholder Workshop at 10.00 a.m. General Offices, Ebbw Vale on 21st June, confirm attendance via email by 15.06.2017 – **forwarded to all Members on email & post.**
 - ii) Cllr Tippings: Consultation on the LDP Review Discussion Paper and invite to workshop – Need to clearly define areas and building of local or regional or national importance.
- Noted.
- b) i) Deighton Primary interested in theatre offer.

ii) Sherman Theatre: Under 7s Christmas tour 2017 – last remaining dates are November 13th, 14th and 18th.

- Noted; Clerk to liaise with Councillor Tippings.

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

- c) i) List of licencing applications week ending 02.06.2017
1) St. George's Church.
ii) List of licencing applications week ending 09.06.2017
1) Tredegar RFC.
iii) List of licencing applications week ending 16.06.2017
1) Lucky Strike Amusements, Gwent Shopping Centre.

- Noted.

- 2) One Voice Wales
- a) Federation of City Farms & Community Gardens Wales events.
- b) Code of Conduct Training, Tuesday 04.07.2017 Council Offices, Newport Road, Bedwas 6.30 p.m. to 9.00 p.m.
- c) Welsh Government Workshops for local government representatives on higher activity radioactive waste management and disposal, 19th July, 2017 in Swansea.
- d) Apply for the Great Place Scheme in Wales which has just launched (*Website*).

- Noted.

3) Members
Correspondence

- a) Cllr J Thomas: Nominations for Civic Awards.
Accepted, two hair salons, revisit RFC once more fully established; Council offered their support.
- b) Cllr Smith: London Tower Fire – in principal idea of collection is good but further discussion is required.

- Noted; Clerk to respond to Mrs. Fox, thanking for suggestion but decided not to participate due

to over supply.

- 4) Aneurin Bevan
University Health
Board
- Invitation to all Members “Talk health: Your voice matters” event Tuesday, 18th July, 2017 2.00 p.m. to 4.30 p.m. Blaenau Gwent Learning Zone.

- Noted; email/post to Members.

- 5) D. Manning-Lee
- Display of Political Banners: Response and further points relating to Council’s email.

- Noted; it was agreed that the decision of Council be upheld as no further evidence presented following on from original correspondence.

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

- 6) Brecon Beacons
National Park
Authority
- i) Weekly list of Planning Applications, Date: 02.06.2017 – ***fwd Cllr Turner***
ii) Weekly list of Planning Applications, Date: 09.06.2017 – ***fwd Cllr Turner***

- Noted.

- 7) Brecon Beacons
Tourism
- Legendary Summer social and networking event at Tretower Court and Castle on 29.06.2017.

- Noted; forward to Councillor A.E. Tippings.

- 8) Communities First
Tredegar Cluster
- Update on changes to their programme.

- Noted; place on website.

- 9) EBO
- Signs quote.

- Noted; to be considered by Finance and Staffing Sub-Committee.

- 10) Keep Wales Tidy
- Would any Members be available to support a litter pick at Aneurin Bevan Stones and request to forward convenient dates to her.

- Noted; Clerk to respond seeking suitable dates, also suggesting further litter pick to area between NCB and top of shops.

11) PUBLICATIONS

BGCBC Roadworks report week ending 15.06.2017 & 23.06.2017; Hospice of the Valleys Spring 2017 news. **Available for Members** – received.

12) AGENDA

Social Services Scrutiny Committee Friday, 16th June, 2017 at 10.30 a.m. Executive Room, Civic Centre, Ebbw Vale; Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee Thursday, 15th June, 2017 at 10.00 a.m. Executive Room, Civic Centre, Ebbw Vale; Environment, Regeneration and Economic Development Scrutiny Committee Thursday, 15th June, 2017 at 2.00 p.m. Executive Room, Civic Centre, Ebbw Vale; Environment, Regeneration and Economic Development Scrutiny Committee Thursday, 15th June, 2017 – reports for items 6 & 8; Executive Wednesday, 21st June, 2017 at 10.00 a.m. Executive Room, Civic Centre, Ebbw Vale; Audit Committee Monday, 19th June, 2017 at 10.30 a.m. Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Ebbw Vale. **Available for Members** – received.

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

068) Planning:

a) **To consider an Officer's Report (if received);** none received – Noted.

b) **Verbal report of the Planning Committee if any;** none received – Noted.

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

App No	Applicant	Proposal
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Councillors E. Jones and T. Smith declared an interest in the following item and took no part in discussion or voting thereon.

C/ 2017/0184	Mr. S. Phillips Tai Calon Community Housing Solis One Rising Sun Industrial Estate Blaina	Construction of two reinforced concrete support columns to elevated walkway between Flats 113-121 and 55-63 St. Georges Court.
No objections		

C/2017/0186	Mr. J. Ridings 7 Ladies Row Tredegar	First Floor rear extension, 7 Ladies Row.
No objections		

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

C/2017/0187	Mr. W. David Infinite Investments Ltd. Regus House Cardiff Gate Business	Erection of a single wind turbine and associated transformer enclosure, Waldron's Commercials, Unit
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No objections
Park

29, Tafarnaubach Ind. Est.,
Tredegar

d) **To consider other planning matters** none received – Noted.

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

- ***One Voice Wales - Motions for 2017 AGM (up to two)***
To be submitted by 12.00 noon, 30 June 2017
Agreed for consideration to remain with Councillor A.E. Tippings, as proposed previously.
- ***Kidney Foundation Wales 'Walk for Life'***
Armed Forces Day—South Atlantic Medal Association
Clerk provided an update on monies raised, for Members' information.
- Chair of Events should liaise with Publicity Events, agreed that Chair of Publicity be nominated to the Events Sub-Committee
- Classic Car Day, Leader read email of Clerk outlining organisational matters relating to the event – agreed that Clerk liaise with Councillor Wayne Hodgins to ascertain interest of Brynmawr Classic Car representative Vintage Car Group assisting Business Forum. It was noted that the admin capacity referred to by a Member was in respect of staff and Members
- opening of Town Clock to children on Monday, agenda for Finance and Staffing Committee, to discuss health and safety for events
- Parc Bryn Bach - golf course closure at 3.00 p.m., write to Trust re: concerns

There being no other business the Meeting closed at 9.03 p.m.

_____ Chair