

TREDEGAR TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Council held in the Council Chamber, Bedwellty House on Wednesday, 19th February, 2020 at 6.00 p.m.

Present: Councillors E. Jones (Chair)

**T. Smith
A.E. Tippings
D.W.A. Howells
G. James
P. Prosser
S. Rees
D. Rowberry
H. Trollope
B. Willis**

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

**By invitation: SMART Cymru representatives:
Chief Executive – Mark White
Member Service Development Officer – Laura Brosnan-James**

364) Apologies. Councillors D. Jones, M. Cross, A. Jones, K. Phillips, J. Thomas, S. Trollope, M. Turner and G. Walters

365) Declarations of Interest

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

Councillors T. Smith, S. Rees and H. Trollope declared an interest in the following item and took no part in discussion or voting thereon.

366) Smart Money Cymru representative, Laura Brosnan-James: to attend

The Chair extended a welcome to the Smart Cymru representatives, Chief Executive - Mark White and Member Service Development Officer - Laura Brosnan-James, who were in attendance to provide an update on the service and respond to any questions raised.

The Member Service Development Officer explained that Smart Money Cymru Credit Union was an organisation that provided straight forward, affordable financial services to anyone living or working in Caerphilly, Blaenau Gwent and Newport. The main office for the area was based in Cefn Golau and the representatives had therefore wished to speak to Council on all services offered to the community.

She explained a credit union was a 'financial co-operative' owned and controlled by its members – an ethical lender offering a friendly, convenient and secure place to save money, with access to low cost, affordable loans. Smart Cymru worked together with the Illegal Lending Money Team to raise awareness in respect of unethical money lenders and signpost

to other providers, such as the CAB, Step Change, etc. in respect of issues, e.g. debt / consolidation.

Each member of Smart Money Cymru made regular payments into their savings account - this fund then provided the basis for preferential rate loans. The income generated by lending helped to meet operating expenses, build on reserves and pay its savers competitive dividends. Savings usually offered a *dividend* rate rather than an interest rate – usually around 0.25-0.5%. This would mean that the better the organisation performed, more could be returned to the community.

The following services were available:

- Savings accounts – working with employers in respect of staff savings
- Children's accounts – for example, working with schools in respect of the Smart Penny Scheme; this was still relatively new in Blaenau Gwent, however a project was currently ongoing with schools in Tredegar
- Low cost loans – the individual's incomings / outgoings would be reviewed to ensure repayments could be made without placing pressure on the individual
- Engage current account – currently operating for approximately one year, allowed the organisation to work together with Registered Social Landlords

A Member said this was a fantastic community resource, owned by the community. The Officer said that at the annual meeting, it had been emphasised that this organisation was here for the community – to be used and run by the community and recruitment was undertaken to raise the profile of Smart Cymru. Town Council was therefore invited to work in partnership with the organisation, which was steadily becoming more visible.

In response to questions raised, the Member Service Development Officer provided a number of examples of the rates for borrowing in comparison with other comparative money lenders, of which Smart Cymru was the most competitive. She confirmed that the annual turnover was just over £2m, with substantial monies pumped into Blaenau Gwent's economy.

The RFO noted the sources of funding received as a result of savings and enquired of other avenues. The Member Service Development Officer said that a small amount of funding was received from Welsh Government, however this was linked to specific funding proposals, e.g. Employees' Savings accounts, as part of a consortium. This was the only grant funding received, otherwise Smart Cymru was completely self-sustainable through lending activities / loans and had a reasonable reserve base to reinvest into services, e.g. new premises, etc.

In response to a question raised, the Member Service Development Officer said that 'same day access' could be achieved if Smart Cymru was aware of the withdrawal by 3.00 p.m. and would be via a BACs payment. She also confirmed that corporate accounts were accepted, such as clubs and societies.

The Chief Executive confirmed that access to services was available online, which helped not only to promote the services but free up staff time to provide one-to-one support for individuals.

Members welcomed the excellent work being undertaken, whereupon the Chair extended the thanks of Council to the representatives for attending and sharing this information, which was greatly appreciated.

The Smart Cymru representatives thereupon left the meeting (6.29 p.m.).

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

It was agreed that the following recommendations of the Policy Sub-Committee be approved:

- The review of the Internal Financial Controls and Financial Regulations policies placed before the Policy Sub-Committee, as reported by Officers, be unanimously recommended for approval to the next full meeting of Council.
- Risk Management Policy and Standing Orders – Clerk to undertake amendments and re-circulate for consideration: to be submitted to next Ordinary meeting of Council for ratification of amendments.

368) To consider a Schedule of Accounts for payment in February 2020

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

- TTC Website – a Member considered the grant application form available on line was difficult to find and suggested a review was needed to ensure the website was user-friendly. The RFO noted the concern and said the grant application form could be placed on the front page.
- I ♥ Payday – cost efficiency review to be undertaken
- Neopost Ltd. – due to a variance in VAT, one cheque had been written back and a replacement reissued
- Smith of Derby – the payment related to the replacement of a new hammer and service undertaken
- E-on – apologies had been received that an enquiry on prices had been mistaken as a request for transfer of service. This company was currently the provider for power however the RFO was awaiting receipt of the pricing package and that of SSE. Members suggested the matter could be reported to OffGen.

There being no further queries regarding the Schedule of Accounts, presented items were approved for payment. Transfer of funds, as approved by Council, would be undertaken in the presence of the appropriate Member and Town Clerk, which was noted accordingly.

369) To confirm budget arrangements in respect of a Mayoral Allowance and Mayor's Civic Budget

The RFO explained that, following on from the budget setting process, Council had agreed for Senior Members (Top 4) to meet to discuss how the allocation of £1,315.00 would be apportioned within the appropriate budget headings. On due consideration, it had been agreed that: £500.00 be set aside for the Mayoral Allowance, which was a salary subject to Tax and N.I. contributions based on individual circumstances, and £815.00 for the Civic budget, which would be utilised by the Mayor for reimbursement of all expenses, e.g. raffles, transport / mileage, etc. This was *Approved* unanimously.

The RFO suggested that it could prove helpful for each Mayor to maintain a diary to help with keeping a record of costs associated with the Mayoral role. Members said that such journals should be retained in the office for audit purposes and not compared on each individual Mayor's activity. The Officer reiterated that the Mayoral Allowance was deemed a salary, to be used at the individual's discretion, and not to meet the expenses of undertaking the role, which should be reimbursed from the Civic budget heading.

Members recognised that some Mayoral years proved busier than others as this was a reactive role and the responsibilities thereon. However, Council would not wish to set a precedent and it was therefore agreed that this allocation be reviewed each year during the budget-setting process.

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

- a) Events Sub-Committee - 8th January, 2020**
- b) Performance Review Sub-Committee - 8th January, 2020**
- c) Civic Meeting of Council - 8th January, 2020: *Amendment to Correspondence Item 1.c)* Agreed: item to be referred to the Blaenau Gwent Destination Manager.**
- d) Tredegar Public Facilities Sub-Committee - 22nd January, 2020**
- e) Performance Review Sub-Committee - 22nd January, 2020**
- f) Ordinary Meeting of Council - 22nd January, 2020**

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

371) Action Sheet

The Action Sheet received for consideration was noted and agreed accordingly, subject to the following:

- As Merthyr Rising was not taking place this year, this could be an opportunity for TTC to access funding
- Health and Safety not observed during the wrapping of tree lights in respect of Christmas illuminations
- Forward Consultation Document received from BG Officer, Lyn Sage, to the Property Asset and Review Officer, as an example of formal consultation

372) Chair to sign Minutes

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

373) Correspondence

- 1) BGCBC
 - a) M. Howland Re: Silurian Boxing. Confirming they have taken on a 21-year lease for the outbuilding at Glanhwy Junior School.
 - Noted.
 - b) M. Howland Re: Bedwellty Park Lodge. Are Council still interested in submitting an application.

- Noted; Clerk to confirm that Town Council remained interested in The Lodge premises at this present time.
- c) Town and Community Councils quarterly liaison meeting 8.04.2020 moved to 22.04.2020 at 2.00 p.m.
 - Noted; although TTC would not be signing the Town and Community Councils Charter, representatives would still be attending the Quarterly Liaison Meetings. Forward to TS / EJ / DJ accordingly.

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

- d) i) List of Licencing Applications, week ending 24.01.2020
- ii) List of Licencing Applications, week ending 31.01.2020
- 1) The Belle Vue – Variation of Designated Premises.
 - Noted.

2) One Voice Wales

- a) Membership renewal 2020-21 £2,436.00 and the benefits of being a member.
 - Expenditure was approved unanimously.
- b) Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales draft Supplementary Report: The principles relating to the reimbursement of costs of care. *Representations by 09.04.2020.*
- c) Future Generations Commissioner for Wales' presentation.
- d) Gwent Valleys Area Committee: Minutes 21.01.2020 – **forwarded to relevant Members**
 - Noted.
- e) Consultation Events Beyond Recycling: Zero waste / reduce carbon footprint free consultation events in Wales.
 - Noted; AET received original copy at the meeting.
- f) Spring Clean Cymru 20th March to 13th April, 2020.
 - Noted; agenda for discussion.

3) Wales Audit Office

Consultation on Future Audit Arrangements for Community Councils in Wales, *deadline for responses is Thursday, 19th March, 2020.*

- Noted.

- 4) Cllr T. Smith Re: Vale View Allotment trees. BGCBC on site 13.02.2020 cutting trees they are responsible for but trees within allotment are responsibility of TTC.
- Noted; Clerk to respond to appropriate BG Officer, Y. Tovey.
- 5) Cllr A. Tippings Poster for Litter Pick event at Cefn Golau Pond Sunday 22.03.2020 at 9.30 a.m. – **added to website**
- Noted.
- 6) Aneurin Bevan University Health Board
- a) K. Cross Re: Community Engagement Event, Bedwellty House on 27.03.2020 between 9.30 a.m. and 12.30 p.m. **Confirm attendance by 17.03.2020.**
 - b) Talk Blaenau Gwent Thursday, 5th March, 2020 between 9.30 a.m. and 11.30 a.m. at Tabor Centre, Brynmawr – **Added to website**
- Noted.
- 7) Torfaen County Borough Council LGPS Training sessions: Understanding the Employer Role. Cardiff 24.03.2020 from 9.30 a.m. to 4.00 p.m.
- Noted.
- 8) K. Walters Suspended the Tredegar Horse Show for 2020 due to lack of communication from D. Watkins, BGCBC.
- Clerk to respond to Mr. Walters, offering Members full support in respect of the event, expressing disappointment that issues had not been resolved.
- 9) Smartsignz Now undertaking embroidery services.
- Noted; retain on record.
- 10) Aneurin Bevan Community Health Council Meeting of Aneurin Bevan Community Health Council Thursday 27.02.2020 at 10.30 a.m. Raglan House, Cwmbran – **added to website**
- Noted.

C/2020/0041 Mr. O. Hoddy Natural Resources Hadnock Road Monmouthshire
No objections Prior notification of forestry development for a proposed forestry road extension, St. James' forest block south east of Tredegar.

C/2020/0045 Ms. G. Hamilton-Peach 2 Cross Brook Cottages Trefil
Conversion of outbuilding into walkers' holiday let accommodation, 2 Cross Brook Cottages.

Observations:

Council had no objections, in principal, and considered the development beneficial. However, a Member was aware of issues relating to a recent new build in this vicinity, with the supply of amenities to the property; therefore, the developer should ensure the development would not impact on neighbours' utilities (e.g. water pressure / drainage).

d) To consider other planning matters Solar Farms - a Member raised an issue in respect of S.106 Agreements, referring to an extension to a solar farm that had been refused, and instructed the Clerk to write to ensure that TTC was made aware of such issues and continue to be involved throughout the planning process in relation to S.106 Agreements.

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

- Opportunity for free planting kit, three options – agreed Deighton playing field and Sirhowy Community Garden (Top 4 to agree option)
- Gymfinity Gymnastics – now occupied two units, the second exclusively dedicated to gymnastics
- Flooding – seek update on works undertaken by NRW and Dwr Cymru have helped to improve the situation to control and reduce the flood risk in Tredegar
- Highway matters of concern: standing plinths split and strewn rubble; Walls knocked down, e.g. gateway at Crown roundabout. Lampposts knocked down and not replaced (it was believed the Local Authority was not pursuing any parties for compensation of damages); grass-cutting maintenance and litter-picking needed alongside access / slip roads to the Heads of the Valleys; a Member had received a call from PCSO Mike Davies of a tree down on the highway from Tredegar to Blackwood; numerous calls had been made to the emergency services number, which had failed, and the Member had needed to contact Matthew Perry direct - Council offered sincere thanks to the Officer for his prompt response and resolving the matter; Nantybwich roundabout – vehicles ignoring 'red' light, which had resulted in a pedestrian being narrowly missed by a car. There were numerous accidents at this site and was a regular occurrence.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 7.57 p.m.

_____ Chair