

TREDEGAR TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Council held remotely via Starleaf Video Conferencing on Thursday, 29th October, 2020 at 9.15 a.m.

Present: Councillors E. Jones (Chair)
D. Jones
T. Smith
A.E. Tippings
M. Cross
K. Phillips
D. Rowberry
J. Thomas
H. Trollope
S. Trollope
M. Turner
G. Walters
B. Willis

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

061) Apologies. Councillors D. Howells, G. James, A. Jones, P. Prosser and S. Rees

062) Declarations of Interest

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

063) Change of Order

Due to internet difficulties being experienced, it was agreed that a 'change of Order' in the consideration of Agenda Items 3., 4. and 5 be approved.

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

- a) Events Sub-Committee - 4th March, 2020**
- b) Civic Meeting of Council - 4th March, 2020** Amendment (pg. 272); *Glanhowy Primary*: the vacancy related to a classroom teacher, not 'Deputy Head'.
- c) Civic Sub-Committee - 18th March, 2020**
- d) Policy Sub-Committee - 18th March, 2020**
- e) Emergency Meeting of the Events Sub-Committee - 18th March, 2020**
- f) Ordinary Meeting of Council - 18th March, 2020**
- g) Events Sub-Committee - 23rd June, 2020**
- h) Ordinary Meeting of Council - 25th June, 2020**
- i) Staffing and Finance Sub-Committee - 2nd July, 2020**
- j) Staffing and Finance Sub-Committee - 14th July, 2020**

- k) Events Sub-Committee - 14th July, 2020
- l) Tredegar Public Facilities Sub-Committee - 27th July, 2020
- m) Meeting of the Allotments Association - 30th July, 2020
- n) Budget Working Group - 13th August, 2020

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

065) 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.

066) National Association of Local Councils: National Salary Award

Consideration was given to the National Association of Local Councils' new pay scales for 2020 / 2021; the Clerk referred to the proposed pay scales, to be implemented and backdated from 1st April, 2020, and confirmed that a copy of the information was available, on request.

It was unanimously agreed that Council support the implementation of the new NALC pay scales, to be backdated to 1st April, 2020.

067) Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales Annual Report - February 2021: To receive report for consultation of Members

The Clerk spoke to the document, highlighting any significant changes / salient points for consideration, and sought comments from Members in respect of the draft report.

Section 13. Payments to Members of Community and Town Councils

- Tredegar Town Council remained in Group B - Income or Expenditure in 2020 / 2021 of £30,000 - £199,999
- 13.8 Council was reminded that 'An individual may decline to receive part, or all, of the payments if they so wish. This must be done in writing and is an individual matter: the RFO had devised a proforma, which was circulated to all elected Members, requiring a signature if anyone wished to waive payment.
- ***Determination 40: All Community and Town Councils must make available a payment to each of their Members of £150.00 per year as a contribution to costs and expenses; and***
Determination 42: Community and Town Councils in Groups B or C can make an annual payment of up to £500.00 each to up to five Members in recognition of specific responsibilities. This is in addition to the £150.00 payment for costs and expenses.
- ***Determination 43: Community and Town Councils can make payments to each of their Members in respect of travel costs for attending approved duties. Such payments must be the actual costs of travel by public transport or the HMRC mileage allowances.***
- ***Determination 44: If a Community or Town Council resolves that a particular duty requires an overnight stay, it can authorise reimbursement of subsistence expenses to its Members at the maximum rates set out on the basis of receipted claims.***

- ***Determination 45: Community and Town Councils can pay financial loss compensation to each of their Members, where such loss has occurred, for attending approved duties.***
- ***Determination 46: Community and Town Councils can provide a payment to the Mayor or Chair of the Council up to a maximum of £1,500.00. This is in addition to the £150.00 payment for costs and expenses and the £500.00 senior salary if these are claimed.***
- ***Determination 47: Community and Town Councils can provide a payment to the Deputy Mayor or Deputy Chair of the Council up to a maximum of £500.00. This is in addition to the £150.00 payment for costs and expenses and the £500.00 senior salary if these are claimed.***

In response to a question raised, the Clerk confirmed it was the individual decision of each council to agree up to five Members, but Tredegar Town Council only approved payment to the Leader at this time. Senior roles and allowances were agendaed, on an annual basis, for consideration at the Annual General Meeting of Council.

- ***Determination 48: Members in receipt of a Band 1 or Band 2 senior salary from a principal council (that is Leader, Deputy Leader or Executive Member) cannot receive any payment from any Community or Town Council, other than travel and subsistence expenses and reimbursement of costs of care.***

In response to a question raised, the Clerk confirmed 'a principal council' related to both Local and Unitary Authorities but was not relevant for Tredegar Town Council, having no Members undertaking a dual role of Town and County Borough Councillor holding senior positions, within Band 1 or Band 2 of the Local Authority.

The Clerk highlighted the following points for clarification:

- ***Contribution towards costs of care and personal assistance:*** draft regulations now proposed the following:
 - *Formal care costs (provider registered with Care Inspectorate Wales)* – care costs to be reimbursed in full; and
 - *Informal care costs (provider unregistered)* – care costs to be reimbursed up to a maximum rate equivalent to the Real Living Wage at the time costs incurred.
- ***Approved Duty 39. ii:*** defined as 'Attendance at any other meeting the holding of which is authorised by the council or a committee or sub-committee of the council, or a joint committee of the council and one or more councils, or a sub-committee of such a joint committee provided that at least two members of the council have been invited and where the council is divided into political groupings at least two groups have been invited.' Members therefore noted the requirement to recognise political groupings.
- ***Claims 41 and Avoidance of duplication 43:*** Members noted the requirement that all claims for payment be accompanied by appropriate receipts proving actual cost; and, a signed statement for a claim for payment (travelling, subsistence or care costs) must include that the member / co-opted members has not made, and will not make, any other claim in respect of the matter to which the claim relates.

The RFO said that no formal notification had been received at present that the £150 Members' Allowances was tax-free / taxable, however OVW feedback would appear to be that the payment would be non-taxable; the budget heading for the Mayor had been split into

two separate headings, i.e. salary and Civic budget established for costs although it had not been specified, when payments were made, where the Mayor's details should be shown on IRPW report sent every year, and was not clear how to report this information.

The report of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales was thereupon noted, and the appropriate Determinations agreed accordingly.

068) To ratify Schedule of Accounts; for payments July - October 2020

The RFO spoke to the report and outlined the expenditure for each month, July to October 2020, circulated to all Members prior to the meeting and a response provided individually to any queries raised.

No refusal to approve any of the payments requested had been received and the RFO therefore asked that Council ratify the Payment schedules for July to October (inclusive).

Members of Council therefore ratified the payments and approved the expenditure accordingly.

There being no further queries regarding the Schedule of Accounts, all presented items were approved for payment accordingly. Transfer of funds had been completed for these months in the presence of the Town Clerk, adhering to social distancing rules, and the Leader via use of video calls.

069) 2020 Tredegar War Memorial Maintenance: to agree annual contract

The RFO had approached three other companies, via the means of each individual online portal; however, no response had been received.

The contract amount was £1,525,00 plus VAT, the Officer had sought further information as to what would be involved within the three visits per year, and responded, as follows: general care of the gilded lettering to prolong life; update on maintenance information; recommend three visits per year; handwashing of gold leaf and repair; hopefully to visit this month.

Upon a vote being taken, it was unanimously agreed that the quote be approved, and the report accepted accordingly.

070) Council Insurance: to ratify

The RFO referred to the insurance paid in May and approved accordingly, within the April through June Minutes, and ratified payment. The Officer said the Audit report in respect of the next three years, outlined that one of three audits would be an intensive, transactive audit. This would review the process from beginning to end, considering the full audit trail. It was not known when within the three-year cycle this would be undertaken.

In order to formalise this current process, the RFO said that it had been agreed for a quote to be approved for one year only due to the Covid situation and the Officer would action a full audit process the next year, i.e. seeking the usual one, three and five-year quotations.

Council noted the information, whereupon the report was accepted, and it was unanimously agreed that the quote be ratified accordingly.

071) To consider any urgent items of Correspondence

The Clerk sought feedback of Council on the following correspondence circulated to Members, via email:

1. One Voice Wales

Consultation on establishing the Town & Country Planning (Strategic Development Plan) (Wales) Regulations 2021. **Consultation closes 04.01.2021.**

Regulations to establish Corporate Joint Committee. Formal consultation on the draft regulations which will establish four regional CJs across Wales. **Consultation closes 04.01.2021.**

Policy Announcement: Compulsory Purchase. **Consultation ends 19.01.2021.**

Free Webinar: Participatory budgeting for meaningful engagement in a pandemic **02.11.2020, 6.30 p.m. to 8.30 p.m.**

- *Noted: to be forwarded to Members upon request.*

2. BGCBC

Email - re: Deighton playing field and Sirhowy Community Garden. 'Confirming intention that leases are for 99 years with break clauses to protect the Council.'

- *Noted: should be promoted when process completed to engage groups and appropriate press release published accordingly.*

072) Urgent Matters of Local Interest or Concern

At the request of Members, the Chair allowed consideration of the following matters, deemed as urgent:

- **Public Conveniences:** A Member referred to the public toilets in Tredegar; she did not agree with keeping the toilets open and considered these should have been closed, as Tredegar was one of the highest hot spots and these should have been closed down in the public interest. The Leader stated the reasons, as outlined in the Minutes of the Tredegar Public Facilities Sub-Committee, e.g. taxi / public transport provision, people having to attend their place of work, etc. Another Member expressed her support of the toilets remaining open, particularly with the mantra of regular handwashing – there were no other facilities for handwashing, public transport continued to operate, and she considered that Council was doing 'our little bit' to resist the spread of the disease. Handwashing was so important during this time to repress spread of the virus. A Member said that someone with medical issues, such as herself, if Council had closed the toilets, she would not be able to go to town. She realised it was the decision of each individual if wanting to go shopping but some in the had to work but not all had access to toilet facilities. Another Member agreed; the public toilets had remained open throughout and, in his opinion, it would be wrong to close this facility now. Also, a Member said that, as Council employed someone to work in the town centre, there was an onus on Council to provide toilet facilities. The Leader emphasised this was a matter for a decision by full Council, not individual Members and comments should not be directed to him as Leader
- **Formal meetings of Council:** a Member proposed that Council reinstate Standing Orders, reverting to two meetings each month on a Wednesday; also, suggested a Press release be compiled thanking key workers as he felt Council as a public body had done nothing to recognise frontline services.

A Member said this meeting of Council had been convened to clear the backlog of Minutes, with another meeting of Council next week to consider finance matters, and at the end of the month, the Annual General Meeting. He did not anticipate the situation changing until at least December and emphasised that both Council Members and staff continued to work hard throughout.

A Member said that Council needed to tell the community Tredegar Town Council was still strong and suggested that Council could arrange for hampers at Christmas and agreed that Council needed to return to some kind of normality next year at least holding regular meetings. The Clerk confirmed that Council meetings were open to the Public, who could apply for the link for meetings to attend remotely.

Another Member asked that meetings revert back to the evening time, as some Members had returned to work; the Chair suggested this could prove difficult for some Members, e.g. providing care for single parent key workers, however this would be considered for the Annual General Meeting. The Leader confirmed there would be an opportunity for a Group Meeting to consider the times.

- A Member made an observation that, due to his organisation's work with schools / children, security protection was the highest possible and suggested Members run a scan on their equipment to ensure there was no risk of virus.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 1.06 p.m.

_____ Chair