

TREDEGAR TOWN COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Council held via Microsoft Teams / hybrid
Wednesday, 21st June, 2023 at 6.00 p.m.**

Present: Councillors **G. Evans (Chair)**
K. Phillips
M. Turner
A.E. Tippings
G. Badham
A. Jones
E. Jones
B. Rees
D. Rowberry
J. Thomas
H. Trollope
S. Trollope
K. Waldron
G. Walters

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

058) Apologies. Councillors P. Cornlouer, E. Griffin and C. Walters

059) Declarations of Interest

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

060) To receive any verbal recommendations of all Sub-Committee / Working Party meetings held prior to this meeting of Council

No Sub-Committee or Working Party meetings had been held prior to Council.

061) 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.

062/a) To receive report of the Internal Auditor for year-end 31st March, 2023;

The RFO referred to the report of the Internal Auditor, all points contained therein would be actioned and reported throughout the year accordingly.

- General Reserves – Governance and Accountability had stated for some time that councils should aim for a level between 25% and 100% of the precept or net operating expenditure; this was highlighted in the budget-setting process. General Reserves were higher than anticipated as not all projects had been completed and this needed

to be taken in consideration as part of next year's budget. However, the RFO confirmed that at no point General Reserves had reached 100% of net expenditure and the Budget Working Party would monitor the position throughout the year.

- Fidelity Cover – the cover was under £250,000 with the next level at £500,000; however, this increased policy had only resulted in an increase of £10.00 on the actual cost.
- Annual Risk Assessment – the Leader acknowledged the risk assessment procedures were time-consuming and questioned whether Council needed to consider employing additional staff to meet requirements. The Clerk confirmed that the Risk Assessment gradings had to be transferred into a matrix and support would definitely be required; it was the intention of the Officer to engage with Senior Members to undertake the necessary evaluation. The Deputy Leader referred to the August recess, when no formal meetings of Council were held, suggesting this could be undertaken during that time, depending on availability.

The RFO confirmed that a different method of reporting was carried out by the new Internal Auditor and the work appeared to be in line with the Toolkit, being Governance driven rather than the financial side; although, the Auditors still covered financial aspects in detail. The Officer welcomed the approach, having the internal audit undertaken from a different point of view and the new Internal Auditor had proven helpful throughout the process, providing examples in respect of the suggestions presented to Council.

The report of the Internal Auditor was unanimously approved.

062/b) To confirm the Annual Accounts for year-end 31st March, 2023 and approve Mayor to sign;

The RFO asked that Members formally agree the accounts to 31st March, 2023; the Officer thereupon highlighted salient points in respect of confirming the accounts.

- The End of year accounts and Asset Register had been considered and agreed as the final / correct documents on 19th April, 2023. Overall income for the year was £157,978.00, and overall expenditure £162,355.00; expenditure was under predicted spend of approximately £32,682.00, mainly due to a number of projects not being undertaken.

The Annual Accounts were approved for year-end 31st March, 2023, and signed by the Mayor, as the Chair of the meeting, in the presence of Council.

062/c) Internal Audit 2022/2023: to undertake a review of the Internal Audit Process for the year ended 31st March, 2023;

The RFO referred Members' attention to the report and appendix checklist: the Officer thereupon presented her report of the Internal Audit Service 2022 / 2023, which was a thematic approach to be reviewed every year.

Council thereupon agreed to the following points, as contained within the report of the RFO:

- Internal Auditor's Report 2021 / 2022 – points raised reviewed and reported throughout the year
- Appointment – New Internal Auditor
- Internal Auditor's Report 2022 / 2023 – Members were satisfied with the report

- External Auditor – there were no reports regarding the audit work covered
- General – communication, compliance and achievement

In respect of the performance of the Internal Auditor, the RFO had engaged satisfactorily with the Internal Auditor and was happy to continue with the same auditors for this current year; the statements outlined within the report were formally accepted and approved accordingly.

Councillors H. and S. Trollope joined the meeting at this juncture (6.21 p.m.)

062/d) Agree the Annual Governance Statements on the Return for 2022/2023, prior to External Audit; and

The RFO explained the process in respect of the electors' rights notice, i.e. to be displayed for four weeks, with a period from September to when the audit was completed, to contact the external auditors with any questions. The Officer would erect the notice promptly, however the dates would remain the same within the public domain.

The RFO thereupon spoke to Parts 1 – 9 of the Annual Governance Statement; Parts 1 – 8 were thereupon agreed as 'Yes' and Statement No. 9 (Trust Funds) as 'not applicable'. Members of the Council therefore agreed, to approve by resolution, to submit the Annual Return to the External Auditor.

062/e) Council approval and certification of Annual Return 2023 to be signed by Mayor

The Annual Return was approved and certified, signed by the Mayor as Chair of the meeting in the presence of Council, and in accordance with the statutory deadline of 30th June, 2023. The RFO requested the Mayor attend the office to sign all the supplementary documents to support the Annual Return; agreed accordingly.

The RFO said that the external audit casework was to commence week beginning 31st July, 2023; the External Audit to the 31st March, 2022 remained outstanding, at no fault of Council having met all deadlines, and the Officer considered Council would not have an audit opinion in September – this was the same position for all town councils throughout Blaenau Gwent.

In respect of the full audit scheduled for the current financial year, the Officer confirmed invoices would be retained in the office via digital copies so as not to waste paper resources. Where requested, originals were being supplied for full audit and the Leader had agreed to deliver these to the Audit Wales office on Council's behalf.

The Chair extended his thanks to the RFO for the tremendous effort spent in preparing the reports and for the hard work undertaken.

063) To re-open the Meeting to the Public

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

064) To consider a Schedule of Accounts for payment in June 2023

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.

- Summer Bandstand Concerts – cheques had been written in readiness to ensure timeliness, bearing in mind the August recess, but would not be released until the appropriate invoice had been received by the RFO.
- BGCBC Grass cutting Deighton/Sirhowy £8,100.00 – this amount covered the contract for the programme from April to September / October and TTC considered this on an annual basis, which was generally considered value for money, competitive and a good standard of work.

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.

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

- a) Annual Meeting of Council – 3rd May, 2023
- b) Ordinary Meeting of Council – 17th May, 2023

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

066) 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.

067) Correspondence

- 1) BGCBC
 - a) R. Havard Re: Summer play sessions, Deighton Field. Requesting permission to deliver a session every Thursday for four weeks starting 3rd August.
 - Members approved this request and were happy to support the play sessions, which were considered an excellent activity for young people: Clerk to confirm and outline the criteria for use, i.e:
 1. Vehicular access for setting up through the main gates using BGCBC key
 2. No vehicles to be driven or parked on any grass areas
 3. Once group vehicles in, lock gates to prevent further vehicles accessing the area
 4. Remove any equipment/banners/promotional materials and collect all litter at end of event
 5. Securely lock the gates once field vacated.

Highlighting that conditions were in place to keep the area in a good safe condition for the use of community groups.

- b) D. Wheelock Re: Blaenau Gwent Local Area Energy Plan meeting 27.06.2023 at 10.00 a.m. Invitation for each of the town and community councils to nominate a representative (one per council) to attend an online workshop on their behalf to help develop the Blaenau Gwent Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP).

- Noted.

- c) M. Howland Re: Community Ownership Fund Round 3.

- A Member had applied to this Fund and advised this was not a user-friendly process.

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

- d) List of applications received, week ending 02.06.2023.

i) New Premise Licence – St. George's Church Hall

ii) Temporary Event Notices for 17.06.2023 and 22.07.2023 – Dukestown Club.

- Noted.

2) One Voice Wales

- a) Innovative Practice Conference 05.07.2023 agenda, cost £60.00 per delegate.

- Council always supported the Awards Conference and usually the Mayor and / or the Leader would attend. Unfortunately, this year the Awards Conference has been arranged for, the National NHS Day and - as this was the anniversary 'NHS@75' - Members were already committed to celebratory events in honour of Aneurin Bevan and the NHS. Therefore, TTC would be extending apologies on this occasion.

- b) Re: Meeting Community Needs in Wales, Planning Aid Wales online event Wednesday 12.07.2023, 10.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. £44.00 per delegate.

- Noted.

- c) Re: Keep Wales Tidy. Local Places for Nature is back.

- Noted.

Councillors M. Turner, G. Badham, E. Jones, B. Rees, D. Rowberry and S. Trollope left the meeting at this juncture (6.45 p.m.)

- 3) GAVO
- a) Blaenau Gwent GAVO Volunteering Awards, open for nominations.
 - Noted; forward to all Members.
 - b) Invite for Community Groups / services volunteer recruitment event 10.08.2023 at Stocktonville Hall.
 - Noted; promote on social media
- 4) Arts Council of Wales
- Night Out Promotor meeting 04.07.2023 at 11.00 a.m.
- Clerk and / or RFO to attend, if available.
- 5) Cllr K. Waldron
- Re: Milefield. Concerns regarding the damaged fence and dog fouling.
- Forward to Cllr J. Thomas to pursue under the Member remit of BGCBC, a Member suggested liaising with the Director of Education / Team Manager – Street Scene.
- 6) Thanks
- a) Parkinson's UK Cymru: Thank you letter supporting World Parkinson's Day.
 - b) Mr. & Mrs. Herring: Thank you card for 60th wedding anniversary flowers.
 - Noted.
- 7) A.E. Tippings
- Re: Art Commission – **Confidential**
- Noted.

8) PUBLICATIONS

BGCBC Roadworks report, week ending 16.06.2023 and 23.06.2023; Blaenau Gwent Heritage Forum meeting 19.06.2023; OVW Infrastructure (Wales) Bill 2023; Post Office Re: Glyn Terrace drop & collect. New lighter format Post Office branch opening at A & J Local Store, 58 Glyn Terrace.

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

068) Planning:

- a) i) List of planning applications received in week 23

CON/2023/0002 'Extension to time limit of existing quarry operations for a period of five years to 31st December, 2029 – Trefil Quarry, Tredegar': a Member said she had no objections to the extension period but suggested approval be subject to a proviso that a Planning Condition be attached to ensure funding was set aside for

remediation of the site, and this be undertaken throughout the three Phases, or a fund established in respect of landscaping at the close of operations.

ii) List of planning applications received in week 24

b) To consider Planning Applications submitted for Council's observations

App No	Applicant	Proposal
C/2023/0129	Mr. R. Lloyd Trade Price Blinds Unit G Crown Business Park Tredegar	Change of use of existing ancillary storage building to house animal incinerator (B2 to Sui Generis) together with external alterations including pitched roof and flue, Unit G Crown Business Park.

Observations:

Members expressed concern as to whether this was a suitable location, bearing in mind the proximity to the Butterflies Day Nursery, raising the following considerations: height of the chimney, whether this was sufficient to expel emissions into the air; pollution; arrangements in respect of delivery of animals.

C/2023/0130	Mr. L. Gore & Ms. K. Trotman 18 Larch Lane Tredegar	Detached dormer bungalow and garage, land adjoining River View and Hill Crest, off Vicarage Road.
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No objections

C/2023/0131	Mr. D. Hughes Overlook House Georgetown Tredegar	Two detached dwellings with detached garages, new access and associated works, Plot adjoining Ty Croeso, Whitworth Terrace.
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No objections

c) To consider other planning matters – Planning Appeal notification:

Retain bungalow and parking area with modified access, Springfield Bungalow, Queen Victoria Street. Additional comments to be sent to the Inspectorate by 10.07.2023.

Observations: Clerk to submit Council's response to the Planning Application received C/2023/0038 - '*Proposed development of two detached properties with associated car parking & external works, land between 12a Victoria Street and Springfield Cottage*'

Llangynidr Common: A Member had been made aware by commoners of the intention of the Duke of Beaufort to plant up to three-quarters of Llangynidr Common for a forestation scheme and asked that Tredegar Town Council be included in any considerations.

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

- TTC Noticeboard – further to the decision of Council to consider the refurbishment of the existing noticeboard and purchasing a new one, the Clerk presented possible options, i.e. wall-mounted or freestanding post-mounted and associated cost, for

discussion / consideration. Members asked that the Clerk ascertain if permission had been sought from Cadw by Aneurin Leisure in respect of a wall-mounted noticeboard, as Bedwellty House had Listed Building status and Council would not wish to incur expenditure if the noticeboard was not permitted.

A Member suggested this may be a project suitable for students of the College campus. It was agreed that consideration be delegated to the Senior Members and Clerk to progress.

- Classic Car Show, 1st July, 2023 – stewards were needed and Members were welcome to volunteer / help in respect of the event.
- Street Lighting – new locks were being fitted to the lamp-posts in The Circle; the Chair said the staff had inferred this was being undertaken due to damage caused to the posts during the Christmas Lights switch-on. The Clerk confirmed that no information had been received by Town Council to this affect and it was suggested that Council should challenge the position if such a claim was received.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 7.38 p.m.

_____ Chair