

TREDEGAR TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Civic Meeting of Council held via Microsoft Teams / hybrid on Wednesday, 6th November, 2024 at 6.00 p.m.

Present: Councillors K. Phillips (Chair)
M. Turner
A.E. Evans
A. Jones
S. Mavar
G. Meredith
D. Rowberry
J. Thomas
H. Trollope
S. Trollope
G. Walters

In attendance: Clerk – Ms. C. Aherne

By invitation: Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Leader / Cabinet Member - Corporate & Performance, Councillor Stephen Thomas
Deputy Leader / Cabinet Member for Place & Environment, Councillor Helen Cunningham
Team Manager - Street Scene, Dave Watkins

178) Apologies Councillors E. Griffin, A.E. Tippings, G. Badham, E. Jones and K. Waldron

179) Declarations of Interest

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

180) To meet with Team Manager - Street Scene (BGCBC) , Dave Watkins, and Cabinet Member for Place / Deputy Leader of the Council, Councillor Helen Cunningham, following complaint raised in respect of sheep roaming

The Chair extended a welcome to BGCBC representatives - the Leader / Cabinet Member - Corporate & Performance, Councillor Stephen Thomas, Deputy Leader / Cabinet Member for Place & Environment, Councillor Helen Cunningham and the Team Manager - Street Scene, Dave Watkins, who had been invited to attend this meeting of Council to provide an update on work being undertaken and respond to any questions raised.

Council was thereupon informed of ongoing actions in respect of addressing issues of animal roaming throughout Blaenau Gwent, and Tredegar in particular:

- The Deputy Leader outlined the work that was being undertaken since 2022 to understand problems with straying animals, establishing a Working Group with partners across Blaenau Gwent – Farmers, NRW, Tai Calon, Highways and Estates.
- Following evaluating complaints, Tredegar had been identified as a ‘hot spot’; local intelligence was of great importance. The public were encouraged to report all incidences and this could be done via the BG App, ringing the local Ward Councillor or contacting the Out of Hours Service.
- The Leader and Chief Executive had written to all farmers on their responsibilities; only a minority was not meeting their responsibility. In response to a question raised, the representatives confirmed that it was not easy to identify the owner without physically catching the animal, as the identification marking was inside the animal’s ear. This could be a lengthy process. For instance, it could take up to fourteen days to seize horses whilst undertaking a dialogue with the owners.
- Damage to fencing was a massive issue – with this being undertaken intentionally by off-road vehicles. A piece of work was being carried out to look at fencing and ensure action was proactive when fencing was being cut. The NRW had a shepherd regularly walking the fenceline to look for damage, as the fencing was being cut not only by off-road users but dog walkers also.
- Operation Harley – Gwent Police were working on a way to respond to calls in terms of highway safety and ensure data was targeted effectively. Two further Officers had been employed to support the Local Authority and this work was having a major impact, e.g. the seizing of twenty vehicles.
- The Clean-up Crew was regularly despatched to respond to complaints of mess on the highway, as issues related not only to sheep but horses and cattle also. A Member said that wild boar had been spotted early in the morning by individuals fishing at St. James’ Pond.
- Complaints were noted, particularly this year, in respect of animal intrusion in residents’ gardens and a map had been compiled focussing on certain areas.
- There was an important change in 2014 which impacted on how animals could be transported by a registered person only.

Council thanked the Leader, Deputy Leader and the Team Manager - Street Scene for attending to provide the update and responding to questions raised; and asked could the Local Authority please keep Council informed on the work being undertaken.

181) To receive Mayor’s report, as appropriate

The Chair said that, although he had been away recently, he had presented a cheque to the Friends of Bedwellty, who were a lovely group and had been appreciative; over the last couple of weeks he had visited the Spiritualist Church, who had been most welcoming and had sent thanks to Council for the cheque; he had also presented cheques to the Photography Club and the Decoupage Group, who also extended thanks. The Mayor had attended the annual event for the Tredegar Male Voice Orpheus, which had been sold out, and was an outstanding event.

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

It was agreed the recommendations of the Sub-Committees held prior to Council be approved accordingly:

▪ **Finance and Staffing – 5th November, 2024**

- Security and Road Traffic Management - Christmas Lights switch-on

To be unanimously agreed that the contract be awarded to Company B, i.e. JFT Protection Group Ltd.; and

It was further agreed, that in line with the Christmas lighting contract, that security provision be sought for a three-year period, based on Council satisfaction of the service provided each year.

- War Memorial

It was therefore agreed unanimously that the tender of Company B be accepted for a three-year period – with the understanding this amount to be prepaid.

- Honour Board

It was unanimously agreed to accept the quote of £916.00.

- Photocopier

It was agreed that Council renew the contract for another two years with a view to changing the photocopier at the end of that contract.

- Transport Provision: T2520 Cairn Walk

Provision of a 16-seater minibus, at a cost of £130.00, was agreed accordingly.

▪ **Events – 6th November, 2024**

Remembrance Sunday: Services of the sound engineer, J Cotton Audio: expenditure of £160.00.

Christmas Lights switch-on and display:

- Services of the sound engineer, J Cotton Audio: expenditure of £210.00.

- Competitions: Poster – personalised mug and Christmas cards for winner; Window Dressing – Expenditure in respect of prize-giving – 1st Prize £50.00, 2nd £30.00, 3rd £20.00.

183) Grants:

a) To receive and consider grants to Sporting and Cultural organisations

(under the provision of the Local Govt. Miscellaneous Provision Act 1976 s.19 and Local Government Act 1972 s.137)

Valleys Life After Stroke - Any financial assistance received would be used towards the running costs of the group such as stationary, new tea urn and cups.

2017/18 March'18 CQ No. 827 £200.00- *Approved accordingly*

Ystad Deri Community Centre - Any financial assistance received would be used towards their project of installing Wi-Fi in the centre to encourage more groups to utilize the centre.

2019/20 July'19 CQ No. 879 £200.00 - *Approved accordingly*

b) To receive and consider grants to Churches & Chapels (s.137) - *Grants as of 01.04.2017 now max £300.00 (before awarding a grant Council must be satisfied the grant is being given for non-religious purposes with the building being for community use) – None received.*

184) To receive the External Audit report to the financial year ending 31st March, 2024

The Clerk outlined the opinion of the External Auditor for the financial year ending 31st March, 2024, as follows:

'Auditor General's report and audit opinion

I certify that I have completed the audit of the Annual Return for the year ended 31st March, 2024 of Tredegar Town Council. My audit has been conducted on behalf of the Auditor General for Wales and in accordance with the requirements of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 (the 2004 Act) and guidance issued by the Auditor General for Wales.

Audit opinion: Unqualified

Except for the matters reported below in my Basis for Qualification, on the basis of my audit, in my opinion no matters have come to my attention to give cause for concern that, in any material respect, the information reported in this Annual Return:

- has not been prepared in accordance with proper practices;
- that relevant legislative and regulatory requirements have not been met;
- is not consistent with the Council's governance arrangements; and
- that the Council does not have proper arrangements in place to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

Other matters and recommendations

I draw the Council's attention to the following matters and recommendations which do not affect my audit opinion but should be addressed by the Council:

Arithmetic error in accounts

There is a minor arithmetic error in the Accounting Statement (line 7) for the comparative financial statement. This is due to a rounding difference.

We recommend that the Council checks the arithmetic and addresses any rounding differences before approval.

There are no further matters I wish to draw to the Council's attention.'

The report and audit opinion of the Auditor General was noted and accepted accordingly.

185) Two Vacancies - Central & West Ward: nominations for consideration

The Clerk referred to the vacancies in the Central & West Ward to be filled via the co-option process. On progressing, in accordance with the approved practice, only one expression of interest had been received and, therefore, unless Members had a justifiable reason to decline, the applicant should be accepted accordingly.

The Leader was aware of the applicant and had no problem with accepting the applicant, who had political experience, and he would recommend for approval.

Consideration was given to the application, which was thereupon approved accordingly in respect of:

- Gerraint Jones-Griffiths

It was agreed the notice would be amended in respect of the remaining vacancy, open-ended with no closing date, so that any applications could be considered by Council immediately on receipt.

186) Correspondence

- 1) BGCBC
- a) Column Testing:
 - i) C. Cuss Re: Column testing. Response to Cllr Turner's email.
 - ii) M. Hicks Re: Christmas Lights / motifs. Response from Cllrs S. Thomas and H. Cunningham.
 - The Leader said he was still unhappy with this response, which was missing the fundamental issue, i.e. this should be the responsibility of the Local Authority. He objected to the statement "it is the responsibility of the third-party organisation to cover any costs associated with the specific structural testing required", which he considered nonsense, as irrespective of the structural integrity, Blaenau Gwent owned these lamp-posts. The Leader reiterated he was not against a fee for third parties to place items on lamp-posts for a specified time but Town Council should not bear the full cost of structural testing rather than contributing to the cost.
 - b) Blaenau Gwent review of polling districts and polling places/stations. **Consultation closing date 22.11.2024.**
 - Noted; forward to all Members.
 - c) M. Hopkins Re: Tredegar Town Map – **forwarded to Cllr Turner.**
 - Noted.

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

- d)
 - 1) List of applications received, week ending 11.10.2024.
 - 2) List of applications received, week ending 18.10.2024.
 - 3) List of applications received, week ending 25.10.2024.
 - 4) List of applications received, week ending 01.11.2024.
- Noted.

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

187) Planning:

- a) i) List of planning applications received in week 42
- ii) List of planning applications received in week 43
- iii) List of planning applications received in week 44

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

App. No.	Applicant	Proposal
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Councillor K. Phillips declared an interest in the following application and took no part in voting thereon; he thereupon provided background information for Council however:

The extension would be attached directly to the Little Theatre and the general manager of the Theatre had been informed a planning application would be forthcoming. The Chair was aware that the Coalfields Regeneration Trust was against this planning application, as it was considered such a development was not ideal for businesses in the surrounding area and there was some opposition. The applicant mentioned they had spoken to him about the works, but the Chair had not been told the actual information in respect of the works being undertaken.

A Member said that he had checked and was not required to declare an interest as a customer frequenting the premises. He supported the application, as currently there was only one unisex toilet and this would allow provision of an additional toilet. He referred to the loss of public houses over recent years and supported expanding the building and keep it open.

C/2024/0261	Mrs. W. Powell 30 Oliver Jones Crescent Tredegar	Change of use of ground floor (no. 41) from retail(A1 Use Class) to form part of existing public bar at No. 41A (A3 Use Class) with two storey rear extension, 41A Castle Street.
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No objections

C/2024/0267	Ms. M. Phibben 12 Arnold Place Tredegar	Two storey and single storey rear extensions, 12 Arnold Place.
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No objections

C/2024/0265	Mr. Jones 43 Brompton Place Tredegar	Replacement garden outbuilding, 43 Brompton Place.
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No objections

c) To consider other planning matters – Planning Aid - Draft Delivery Agreement: South East Wales Strategic Development Plan. Consultation events – forward to Councillors M. Turner and A. Jones.

188) Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales Annual Report - October 2024

The Clerk spoke to the draft report of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales, highlighting any changes and salient points for consideration, to be agreed by town and community councils.

Council noted all options in relation to allowances / payment for Members; observing that Senior roles and allowances were agendaed on an annual basis for ratification at the Annual Meeting of Council. The Clerk highlighted there were no changes to the payments and benefits paid to Elected Members for 2024.

Council noted and agreed:

- **Determination 7: Community and Town Councils mandatory payments**
The Panel continued to mandate payments for extra costs of homeworking and payment for office consumables, i.e. £156 and £52 respectively; being no change in the Determination from the previous year; and
- **Determination 9: reporting requirements**
An annual statement was to be submitted by 30th September each year, to be published on the community / town council website. The Panel proposed that from September 2024, returns need show the total amounts paid in respect of mandatory payments only.

189) To approve the Annual Report - April 2023 to March 2024

Consideration was given to the draft Annual Report - April 2023 to March 2024 and Training Plan; the Clerk sought the feedback of Members, whereupon:

It was agreed that the draft Annual Report and Training Plan be accepted accordingly. Council expressed appreciation to the Clerk for the work undertaken in producing the Annual Report.

190) Updates regarding Bedwellty House and Park / Parc Bryn Bach - any issues to have been previously reported direct to the House Management / Aneurin Leisure personally

- None received.

191) Delegates: to receive and consider reports from Delegates to Outside Bodies and the recommendations of Sub-Committees / Working Parties:

- a) **Joint Committee of Local Councils** – Meeting to be held 3rd December.
- b) **Gwent Valleys One Voice Wales** – No meeting.
- c) **One Voice Wales Larger Councils and AGM** – No meeting.
- d) **Tredegar Twinning** – No meeting.
- e) **Pen Bryn Oer Community Fund** – Awaiting grant figures to be released.
- f) **School Governing Bodies** – St. Joseph's RC Primary: the Mayor had attended a recent meeting at the School and said they were doing an excellent job. Ysgol Bro Helyg Primary: the Headteacher was due to retire and the School was considering the process of advertising for a new Head; and, the new School was on hold subject to an issue with the contractor.
- g) **Blaenau Gwent Heritage Forum** – No update.
- h) **Tredegar Business Forum** – No update.

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

- Royal Mail – the Tredegar branch was replacing the older diesel / petrol vehicles with thirteen electric vehicles and should be commended for this pioneering initiative. Council agreed this was good news for Tredegar in ‘going green’ and suggested this should be promoted on social media, i.e. Facebook, Twitter and website.
- Tredegar Comprehensive School – a Member reported a serious issue of bullying at the School by a group of pupils. He had reported the matter to both the Board of Governors, Headteacher and appropriate teacher and suggested the technique to deal with issues of bullying was failing.

The Member had also spoken with Local Authority Members, Councillors John Morgan and Jacqueline Thomas, who were prepared to work with the School. Councillor Thomas confirmed discussions were ongoing with the School in respect of the culture of bullying. Another Member confirmed he had attended disciplinary hearings and there was a zero tolerance on bullying and people should continue to report any incidences. Council advised the Member to write a letter of complaint to the Headteacher and copy the correspondence to the Chair of Governors.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 7.42 p.m.

_____ Chair