

PORTHCAWL TOWN COUNCIL



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF COUNCIL HELD (ELECTRONICALLY) ON THURSDAY, 11th March 2021

PRESENT:

COUNCILLORS: B Jones (Mayor)

M Chegwen	B Lewis
M Clarke	S Maitland-Thomas
N Clarke	J Pratt
L Desmond-Williams	R Smith
M Emmet-Lewis	L Tallon-Morris
A Harris	C Wesgate
T Hill	C Wintle
R Lee	

TOWN CLERK: Kerry-Leigh Grabham
IN ATTENDANCE Ian Hughes – Audit Wales

219. To receive apologies for absence

None received.

220. To receive Members' Declaration of Interest in respect of business to be transacted

Cllr R Smith Agenda Item 7 Personal Interest
Cllr B Jones Agenda Item 7, 8 & 11 Personal Interest, BCBC Member
Cllr N Clarke Agenda Item 7 & 8 Personal Interest, BCBC Member
Cllr M Clarke Agenda Item 7 & 8 Personal Interest, BCBC Member
Cllr T Hill Agenda Item 11 Personal & Prejudicial
Cllr S Maitland-Thomas Agenda Item 11 Personal

221. To confirm and sign the Minutes of the Meeting of Council held on 11th February 2021

Resolved:- To confirm and sign the Minutes of the Meeting of Council held on 11th February 2021 as a true and accurate record.

222. To consider any matters arising from the Minutes of the Meeting of Council held on 11th February 2021 (for information purposes only).

Page 3, item 212 Cllr L Desmond-Williams mentioned that the minutes did not reflect the discussion that took place, regarding the items not going on to pink paper.

The member raised the discussions regarding the KSS invoice, the amount paid for the work and the work not being completed. The member wanted to know who had authorised the work. The Town Clerk advised that the invoice had been discussed in the Finance & Governance meeting on the 4th March 2021, however, due to time pressures, these minutes were not available to be included in this agenda. The Clerk mentioned that a full and frank discussion had taken place with regards the invoice.

Page 4, item 215 Cllr S Maitland-Thomas informed Council that together with Cllr L Tallon-Morris the inspection of the bridge at the Wilderness had taken place and quotes will now be sourced for its repair.

223. To adjourn, if necessary, to take Public Question Time

There were eleven members of the public present. One member of the public posed the following question to the Mayor.

Were local tradesmen offered the opportunity to put quotes forward for the subway work. Cllr B Jones advised that he would respond in writing within 10 working days.

224. To consider item – Minutes of Promoting Porthcawl meeting held electronically on Thursday 25th February 2021

Cllr T Hill presented this item as chairperson.

Cllr L Desmond-Williams proposed that colour lighting also be considered when quotes are obtained.

Cllr N Clarke questioned if a vote should be taken on the recommendations before Council.

The Clerk informed, Council that an administration error had occurred when producing the minutes, these should have stated resolved and not resolved to recommend. The Clerk apologised to Councillors for the error.

The Summer Planting Scheme was discussed. A member queried the quote supplied and the cost of the planting scheme.

The Clerk advised that there was a separate item on the agenda regarding Summer planting for consideration and she advised that the quote was based on last years' planting scheme.

Cllr M Clarke mentioned that due to Covid 19 the decision team approved additional flowers and to show support for the NHS during the pandemic crisis it had been decided to place summer flowers at the medical centre.

Cllr L Desmond-Williams stated that the flower displays in Porthcawl are outstanding year on year.

Cllr M Clarke mentioned that a meeting had been held with BCBC regarding the roundabouts and BCBC officers had left the meeting giving a commitment that consideration would be given to the roundabouts.

The Clerk advised Council that a meeting was scheduled for Monday 15th March with BCBC highways where the roundabouts and Christmas Lighting will be discussed.

Cllr J Pratt queried why the Media Screens could not be discussed?

The Town Clerk advised that the Media Screens form part of the Audit, which is being discussed at item 12a. The Clerk also advised that it would be counterproductive to discuss the Media Screens as the outcome of the Audit is yet to be determined.

Resolved:- To confirm the minutes of the Promoting Porthcawl Committee held (electronically) on 25th February 2021.

225. To consider correspondence received from Leanne Rowlands, Play & Family Support BCBC – Potential for Holiday Programmes Summer 2021

Cllr M Clarke informed members that Council have supported the scheme for several years.

Cllr J Manley informed Council that before 2020 the cost of the scheme was £2,987 and 752 children had attended.

A member queried if there would be an impact on the scheme if Welsh Government impose catch up schooling over the summer holidays.

It was pointed out that the letter was asking for Councils support.

Resolved:- That BCBC is notified that Porthcawl Town Council supports the scheme.

226. To consider correspondence received from Kelly Watson, Chief Officer Legal, HR & Regulatory BCBC – Bridgend County Borough Council (Off- Street Parking Places)(Civil Enforcement Order 2013)(Amendment No.3) Order 2021

Cllr T Hill took the chair for this item.

Cllr A Harris mentioned that the order had been signed back in February 2021 and is therefore only for noting and is disappointed that it is for the whole of Salt Lake car park apart from the area designated for the food store.

Cllr B Jones was concerned regarding parking during the summer and queried why Porthcawl residents have to pay for 7 days parking when in other parts of the Borough charging is only for 6 days and also where the revenue is being spent.

Cllr M Clarke informed members that the letter follows on from a consultation that Porthcawl Town Council took part in. There are two options to the Council, that the order is accepted, or the council respond to the letter.

Much discussion took place regarding the revenue received and the charging regime.

Resolved:- That a letter is sent to BCBC to ask why the charge for Porthcawl car parks is for 7 days when the rest of car parks in Bridgend only charge for 6 days.

227. To consider e-mail correspondence received from Cllr J Pratt – Offer of Benches

Cllr J Pratt introduced the offer of benches from the Landlord of the Jolly Sailor Public House.

Members thanked Cllr J Pratt & Mr Ruck for the offer of the benches and it was mentioned that the Town Council are only responsible for Newton Green so advice would need to be sought from the Charity Commission and BCBC conservation team.

Members thought that it was a great idea, but were concerned the benches were going to be left out overnight, who would insure and maintain them. Also, child safety and the positioning of the benches was discussed.

Resolved:- That the Town Clerk contact Mr Ruck and thank him for his kind gesture and to contact the Charity Commission to seek permission for the benches and any other necessary steps, e.g. maintenance and insurance. For a proposal to be brought back to council which will include consultation with BCBC conservation team.

228. To consider item – Porthcawl Shout Samtampa Project – Cllr N Clarke

Cllr N Clarke explained that in 2016 Porthcawl Shout embarked upon a project to remember the SS Samtampa tragedy and the loss of 47 lives.

The project entailed a sculpture and an educational programme and it was hoped that the memorial would be placed in 2017 to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Samtampa disaster. Due to not being able to find a site for the memorial at that time the sculpture is still with the sculptor in Swansea. Cllr N Clarke mentioned that she had spoken with Gary Victor of Porthcawl Shout and BCBC officers in order to bring this project to its conclusion.

BCBC officers have proposed the Watersports Centre at Rest Bay as a possible site for the sculpture to be placed.

Cllr N Clarke stated that the Samtampa tragedy is part of our Towns history and asked for Councils support that once the sculpture was sited that the Town Council insure and maintain it.

The Clerk mentioned that she had spoken with Zurich, Porthcawl Town Councils' insurance provider and the cost to insure the sculpture would be roughly £350 per annum.

Cllr J Pratt declared an interest as a member of the HM Coastguard. He informed members that the 75th anniversary of the Samtampa Memorial would be 2022 and would it be possible to tie in the siting to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the creation of HM Coastguards.

Cllr N Clarke advised that she would need to put the proposal to Porthcawl Shout and that the memorial is ready for transporting and siting but it didn't mean that the commemoration couldn't take place in 2022.

Cllr M Chegwen thanked Cllr N Clarke & Cllr M Clarke for their work on the memorial and agreed that the new location is a good suggestion.

Members were reminded that the important point to remember were the families of those involved in the tragedy.

Resolved:- That Porthcawl Town Council take responsibility for the Samtampa memorial and once sited the Council to insure and maintain the sculpture and for it to be included on the Town Councils Asset Register.

229. To consider correspondence – Dougie's Disinfecting Services

Cllr L Desmond-Williams queried how the correspondence had been placed on the agenda, and highlighted the cost per year of £5,460.00 and proposed it should be placed before the Operations Committee. If tendering was required then that would be the next step and an enhanced DBS check would be required.

Discussion took place regarding whether Council operated a similar cleaning programme at the moment. It was mentioned that the Council have a part-time member of staff who opens, closes and also cleans the toilets. Members enquired if fogging of the toilets was required.

Cllr M Clarke advised that appropriate processes would need to be followed and queried this particular item as costs of the proposed service were included in the letter. Other quotes would need to be sourced. It was thought that the company named could be disadvantaged as the cost of the service was now in the public domain.

Resolved:- That the Clerk assess the need whether a fogging service for the toilets is required and that the item should be placed on the Operations Committee for further discussion.

230. Town Clerk Reports Item 12a External Audit

The Town Clerk introduced the report and updated members with regards to the status of the external audit for 2019/2020. Members were informed that due to residents contacting Audit Wales with concerns relating to the financial governance of the Council, Audit Wales have confirmed that they will be conducting a more in-depth external audit of the 2019/2020 accounts.

The Clerk advised members that the external auditor Mr Ian Hughes from Audit Wales is in attendance and would explain the scope of work to be carried out. The Clerk reminded members that as explained in her e-mail on Wednesday Mr Hughes would be unable to answer specific questions relating to the transactions that were being looked at and the outcome or findings so far.

Cllr L Desmond-Williams informed members that she has concerns with regards the financial year 2019/2020 and could these be e-mailed to Mr Hughes.

Mr Ian Hughes introduced himself and explained that he has been asked to look at the 2019/2020 financial year due to extensive correspondence received from members of the public raising concerns with specific transactions. At the moment, the bulk of the work has been document reviewing. Not all answers come from documents, the next stage will be to speak to the authors of the reports and the Councillors involved and this is currently being considered.

Mr Hughes informed members that he welcomes correspondence from all members and is happy for the Town Clerk to provide his e-mail address. Mr Hughes also offered the option of group meetings but advised members they would be in listening mode, as opposed to answering specific questions or queries. No time scale can be confirmed for the audit, due to various issues, however, the audit is being given high priority.

Mr Hughes then explained the audit process and the different outcomes that can be given to Councils.

Unqualified Limited Assurance Audit – Financial Governance has met the required standard.

Qualified Audit Opinion – Minor concerns with regards to accounts being published on time or asset register not being up to date.

Public Interest Report - Financial Governance not being met. These reports are addressed to the Council and the Council has to respond.

Cllr N Clarke thanked Mr Hughes for attending the meeting and asked if staff shortages and Covid would be considered as the Town Council did not have a Responsible Financial Officer in place for 14 months.

Mr Hughes confirmed that this would normally be a qualified audit as it is significant not to have a Responsible Finance Officer in place for more than a year.

Cllr J Pratt asked the auditor what the process would be once the report has been issued.

Mr Hughes stated it would be dependent on how significant the findings were as that would influence the report. He confirmed that Audit Wales does not have any powers to discipline staff, however, they can make recommendations on appropriate action. He also mentioned that Audit Wales have no powers to take sanctions against members conduct however, that would be for the public ombudsman to consider.

Cllr R Smith thanked Mr Hughes for attending and raised minute number 207 from the Council meeting in February where it was discussed that the Town Clerk and the Mayor instruct an internal auditor to look into the 2019/2020 accounts.

Mr Hughes informed members that he does not feel it would be beneficial to bring in another auditor when Audit Wales are already undertaking the work, they have better access rights and it may create more work for the Town Clerk.

Cllr M Clarke asked the Clerk to provide clarity on minute number 207 is dispensed within the correct manner.

The Town Clerk stated that she would need to take some advice and report back.

Resolved:- To note the report and for the Town Clerk to inform members of the appropriate action with regards to minute number 207 when the advice had been received.

231. Town Clerk Report – Item 12b Councillor Disqualification

The Clerk introduced this item with regards to a Councillor disqualification for non-attendance at Council meetings for a period of six months. The Clerk advised members that whilst there is no legal requirement to inform members that they are nearing their six months of non-attendance, a good clerk would keep track and its generally best practice amongst the sector to notify members.

A member queried the process in order to call an election.

The Clerk advised members of the process, which would require a member of the public to obtain 10 signatures and then to send the request to BCBC electoral services. A by election could take place if more than one person stood for election. If an election isn't called then BCBC will notify that a co-option can take place.

Cllr L Tallon-Morris queried if it's a legal requirement to remind members if they are nearing six months of non-attendance that they receive a notification.

The Town Clerk confirmed that there are no legal requirements, however, it is best practice.

Resolved:- That the Clerk inform BCBC Electoral Services of the vacancy for the Newton Ward and the need to re-advertise the West Central Ward vacancy.

Cllr B Jones evoked standing order 3Y to extend the meeting by 30 minutes.

232. Town Clerk Report – Item 12c Summer Planting Scheme

The Clerk introduced the Summer Planting Scheme, this item was deferred from Promoting Porthcawl Committee and approval is being sought from Council to progress the Summer Planting.

A member queried the number of planters and barrels.

Cllr T Hill advised members that in the past the quote for the planting scheme has been in the region of £6,000 however, due to Covid 19 the decision team increased the Summer Planting Scheme. It was proposed the old planting scheme be implemented for this year.

Cllr N Clarke stated that there were many more planters than was originally envisaged but suggested that one be placed outside the Medical Centre.

Cllr T Hill proposed that the planting scheme should revert back to what it was before 2020 with an additional planter at the Medical Centre.

Resolved:- That the Clerk together with Cllr T Hill agree the planting scheme and inform Guttridges of Councils decision.

233. Town Clerk Report – Item 12d Invoices for Payment

The Clerk introduced the report and explained to members that the invoices attached in Appendix b were to be approved for payment.

Members were pleased to see the invoices brought to Council. There were a number of councillors who wished to ask questions regarding the invoices. The EDF invoice for John Street toilets for electricity was queried. It was also mentioned that general cost of services to the Council should be explored by the Finance & Governance committee to see if savings could be made. It was mentioned that energy efficient lighting will be installed in the toilets when refurbishment takes place.

The invoice for South Wales Web Solutions was queried as to whether, it was a monthly invoice and what did the Council actually receive for the amount.

The Town Clerk advised that the invoice is for updating the website and South Wales Web Solutions have advised that training would be required by the Town Clerk and the Assistant Town Clerk in order for the staff to be able to update and add to the website.

It was agreed that the staff should undertake the training for the website.

Cllr M Clarke suggested that the option be available to members to undertake the training should they wish.

Questions were asked regarding the terms of engagement of the accountant now that Council has a Responsible Financial Officer in place.

The Clerk advised that a discussion had taken place at the Finance & Governance meeting with regards to the termination period required to end the contract and that Finance software has been demonstrated to the Chair & Vice-Chair of the Finance & Governance Committee.

Cllr M Clarke advised members that papers are supplied a week in advance and any queries, should be raised with the Town Clerk before the meeting so that queries can be answered or answers from suppliers can be obtained.

Resolved:- That payment is approved for all invoices and the Town Clerk to query invoices as discussed.

234. Town Clerk Report – Item 12f Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales Report

The Town Clerk introduced the report and the recommendations made by the IRPR.

Cllr N Clarke advised members that there had been no change in the recommendations since last year and proposed that the recommendations be accepted.

Resolved: That IRPR recommendations be accepted.

Meeting closed at 9.30pm