

Minutes of a Meeting of the Newcastle Higher Community Council held by telephone conference via Zoom on Tuesday 8th December 2020 at 7.00 p.m.

Cllr Altaf Husain: Presided

Present (9) Councillors Marged Griffiths, Altaf Hussian, Mal John, Ann John, Phillip Lathey, Alex Marshall, Meryl Wilkins, Dave Fowler, James Radcliffe. Mr Guy Smith From BCBC

Clerk, John Richfield, Clerk appointed from October 2020, Adam Davies

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllrs Derrick Baker, Byron Jones and Heidi Bennett.

2. Written Declaration of Interest in Agenda items

Before the start of the meeting Council members made declarations of interest in agenda items on the form provided, as follows:

Cllr Meryl Wilkins made a declaration relating to her personal interest in the following subject; the Pheasant Field. Cllr Meryl Wilkins' full list of declarations of interests can be found on the Councils website.

3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 12th November 2020

Cllr Meryl Wilkins addressed her concerns regarding Rock Cottage to be recorded. The minutes were then approved and signed.

Matters Arising on the Minutes

On Page 2 Rock Cottage, it was agreed that the Council will discuss the concerns raised by Cllr Meryl Wilkins. Rock Cottage is surrounded by Pen Y Fai Common and which is regulated by BCBC. The Council has agreed to contact BCBC regarding this matter.

4. Reports from BCBC Members

a. Cllr Altaf Hussain

Condition of footway from Glanrhyd to Penyfai

Cllr Hussain has been notified that the footway concerned has been inspected, with some defects noted and an order has been issued for the repair. Further work has been registered due to the condition of the road within the area and this will be resurfaced if funding or resources become available.

Remembrance

The Chair, Cllr Altaf Hussain and Cllr Mal John attended a low key Remembrance and wreath laying ceremony on behalf of the Council at Pen Y Fai.

Drop Kerb Crossing Point

Mr Jonathan Parsons has responded to the Council noting that he is unable to commit to a site meeting due to current restrictions. Although, if there are any areas of particular concern then they can look at this by way of photos or maps.

Meeting with Mr Guy Smith on 2 December 2020 at Pheasant field

The meeting was attended by Cllr Altaf Hussain, Cllr Alex Marshall, Cllr Mal John and The Clerk Adam Davies. Cllr Altaf Hussain praises Mr Guy Smith for his support and personal attendance.

Royal Navy's Longest Serving Wren

Bridgend County Borough Council intends to present Barbara McGregor who lives in Aberkenfig, the Royal Navy's longest – serving Wren with the area's Armorial Bearings to celebrate her retirement after 44 years of service. The event had to be put on hold due to Covid-19 restrictions. Cllr Altaf Hussain has requested the Leader BCBC to include NHCC representation at this event.

Tyn' Garnand

Senior Caseworker, from 'Managing Better Service' has visited the resident at Ty-Y- Garn and discussed the unadopted road. Further guidance was provided regarding the external lift as there were some issues reported. A full Healthy Home check was completed and processed. A grant for repairs and improved lighting to the home was installed along with a call bell. In addition a Benefit check will take place to ensure benefits are claimed and advice on other services provided.

The Pheasant, Pen y Fai

A Resident raised their concern regarding The Pheasant, in Pen y Fai. They believe it is unfair and disproportionate having these restrictions placed on them by the government under the pretence of managing the coronavirus. Cllr Altaf Hussain as the elected ward member for Pen y Fai has raised his concerns to the Welsh Authorities and is yet awaiting a response.

b. Cllr James Radcliffe

Kier Waste Management

Cllr James Radcliffe raised his concern regarding Kier the waste management company not collecting rubbish located within small streets around Aberkenfig ward. The Councillor suggests that any further disruption to this service to be reported to himself.

Road Safety

The Residence Association of Aberkenfig has now created a petition for improved public safety on the main Maesteg road. Cllr James Radcliff will send this to the Clerk for distribution.

5. Mr Guy Smith BCBC Community Asset Transfer Officer and Report on Community Asset Transfer site meeting Wednesday 2 December.

Mr Guy Smith the BCBC Community Asset Transfer Officer notified the Council that on the 1st April 2021 (in principal) the Council will take over the management of the Pheasant Field Kickabout area. Cllr Mal John has received quotes from 3 different maintenance companies for the Council to look at in a future meeting. Bridgend County Borough Council has agreed match funding from the capital grant scheme to the value of £7,671 match funded for a project costing £15,303. A copy of the grant application has been sent to the Clerk Adam.

The Council is made aware to undertake major work at the Kickabout area or Cavendish Park. The Council must apply for a licence from BCBC the regulators, Mr Guy Smith kindly offers his help with the application.

The Council has been notified that there are further funding opportunities available for equipment grants under the CAT fund for upto £10,000. The funding pot can include a container for the Council to store equipment. A container for the Council will require a licence and possibly planning permission due to certain restrictions. BCBC and the parks department can provide the Council with guidance. Mr Guy Smith provided the Council with a list regarding the maintenance routine; this information can be sent on request.

In regards to the Cavendish Park and play area, the Council have indicated that vehicle access would be problematic and Mr Smith has raised this with the CAT steering group which they are happy to coincide the issue of the lease being progressed under section 106 with the property developer. No completion date has been agreed for Cavendish Park.

Mr Guy Smith discussed that the Council is required to undertake weekly inspections for each playing facility. A further inspection must be taken annually by an independent company, the Council must also maintain a detailed accident reports book. Mr Guy Smith recommends placing a sign at each facility so accidents can be reported to the Clerk. The Council must have Public liability insurance to the value of 5 million pounds. The Council must have a risk assessment for all assets within its managed facilities. Mr Smith suggested we look at (ROSPA) The royal society for the prevention of accidents which has good guidance for play areas.

The Council provided Mr Guy Smith with some questions.

The Council is to complete weekly inspections, the Council and its Councillors, or contractors the Council employ can do this. The inspection is a visual inspection, checking that play equipment, pathways and other obstacles are safe.

Mr Guy Smith was unable to discuss with the Parks Department a Service Level Agreement, but Mr Smith will provide any feedback to the Clerk to circulate.

The Council requests that we adopt the current check lists the BCBC currently use. Mr Smith confirms that once the date is set, we will arrange a site meeting with someone from the parks department to attend so they can then provide any check lists or risk assessments they hold.

The Council within its legal documentation will be agreeing to pay a peppercorn rent of £1 per annum, this is added for legal reasons but isn't expected to be collected.

6. Report from Maintenance Committee

Cllr Mal John and Cllr Alex Marshall have been looking at this year's expenditures and estimating the current end of year expenditures. This item is still ongoing.

7. Reconstitution and membership of Sub-groups of Councillors for Maintenance and Planning

The Council discussed the current planning committee rosta, Cllr Heidi Bennet and Cllr Meryl Wilkins. Cllr Ann John was nominated to be part of the planning committee. The Council Unanimously agreed this.

The Clerk and RFO is responsible for the finances over the years with the Clerk often seeking support from other Councils and Councillors. Cllr Marged Griffiths was nominated to participate and a further candidate was not selected. The Council is to defer this item to the next meeting.

8. Presentation of annual School Gifts

Cllr Meryl Wilkins kindly thanked the Schools for contacting the Council early to arrange a gift for all the school children. The chocolate gifts were delivered early December to the nearest box due to Covid restrictions. The cost to the Council was £972, which will be reimbursed to Cllr Meryl Wilkins.

9. Finance

a. Accounts for payment

	£	
Bridgend Town Council (empty bins)	1,360	(201761)
Scott Landscapes (work on footpaths, and woodlands)	3,095	(201762)
David Thomas (water flower baskets, uplift and store)	5,485	(201763)
JR quarterly Salary Oct - Dec 20	1,393.10	(201764)
JR Tax Oct-Dec 20	348.40	(201765)
AD Salary Oct-Dec 20	1,654.85	(201766)
AD Tax Oct-Dec 20	413.71	(201767)
JR Reimbursement Oct- Dec 20	139.30	(201768)
Cllr Meryl Wilkins (School Gifts)	972.00	(201769)
Floodlight electrical LTD (Christmas Lighting)	1388.40	(201770)

b. Budget 2021-2022 and Precept

The Council will be aware that it is a requirement (set out in the Local Government Finance Act 1992 Section 49 A) for precepting bodies such as Community Councils to produce a budget each year in order to set a precept

To set the precept we need to work out:

(i) Expenditure required for the coming financial year, as a budget to split the expenditure over

different headings,

- (ii) Any contingencies, considering the level of contingency as part of the annual risk assessment.
- (iii) To consider any anticipated liabilities that may occur.
- (iv) Once the expenditure requirement has been established, the Council needs to assess how to meet it.

The Council has agreed to take on some of the costs and associated liabilities currently borne by the BCBC, (in the form of two Community Asset Transfers), and last year the principle that the precept may need to rise accordingly in future years was accepted for this reason. Reserves are currently at a prudent level. (a little under 50 % of estimated annual spend.) As agreed in 2011, the sum of £25,000 grant aid for the Aberkenfig Square had been used for Penyfai projects, leaving an unallocated balance of £5,500 from this earmarked reserve. This may be allocated towards the Community Asset transfers, both of which are in Penyfai? The salary of the new Clerk has been set in October 2020 according to the recommended scale and the average hours worked by the Clerk agreed.

At some future time, though not necessarily in the next financial year, footpath number 1 will need significant work, which may cost £3,000. NB NHCC is not obliged to do this. Similarly, there is a request to consider a capital grant to provide water on the allotments, but this is at a very early stage, so does not need to appear in next years budget.

The Council approved the following:

	£
General Administration	8,000
S.137 (up to)	4,000
Salaries	8,300
Pension (up to)	1,650
Christmas Lights	6,000
Insurance	500
Audit	500
Allotment costs	1,000
Footpaths	2,000
Woodlands	5,000
Hanging Baskets	7,500
Empty Bins	5,500
CAT Maintenance	8,000
Remuneration of Cllrs	1,800
One-off pension payment	15,000
Total	74,750

Earmarked Reserves would be maintained at the following levels:

Election Reserve 2022	4,000
Penyfai project reserve	5,500 (balance of 25,000)

Woodland Management	5,000
Total earmarked	14,500

General Contingency 15,500

Total Reserves 30,000

Estimated Income budget

	£
Footpaths	600
Allotments	400
Vat Refund	5,000
Precept	53,637
Total Income	59,637

Summary

	£
Opening balance 1.4.20	46,372
Less Expenditure to date 30.11.20	28,099
Less planned expenditure to 31.3.21	22,819
Add est. VAT refund	5,000
Add 2020 Precept	50,000
Add footpath grant	659
Balance as at 30.11.20	51,113 (NB Reserves kept in reserve)
To spend a budget of	74,750
And keep reserves at	30,000

The Precept was agreed to be set at a level of £53,637

Cllr Meryl Wilkins disagreed with the increase of the precept which was noted on the meeting minutes.

10. Correspondence

1. Water for the Allotment in Aberkenfig

Following the Council meeting a letter from Cllr Alex Marshall was sent to Aberkenfig allotments requesting further information regarding the costings

2. Planning Applications / Highway Issues.-Newcastle Higher Community Council

Updating BCBC regarding the new clerk email address for any future correspondence.

3. Precept Requirement 2021-22-Newcastle Higher

Letter requesting the Community Council to set its precept and inform the BCBC Finance Department by 6 January 2021. A note on the budget is on the agenda for this meeting.

4. School Gifts

An email was sent to Tondy, St Roberts and Pen Y Fai primary schools asking if they wish to receive a gift from the Council for their pupils.

5. Baskets 2020

A request from Boverton Nurseries LTD requesting if we wish to purchase plants from them this year. A telephone conversation took place and the Nurserie wishes to know the outcome as soon as possible. Cost stated as £1,746.00 excluding VAT.

6. Coity Higher Community Council

In response to the Council's request to have a solicitor in place in readiness for our planned CAT transfer, the Clerk asked CHCC if they would recommend a solicitor as they have recently been through the same process.

7. King Davies Solicitors

With recommendation from Coity Higher Community Council, I have received a quote from King Davies Solicitors of Maesteg to support the Council with any legal need regarding the CAT transfer. The cost of which is £300 plus VAT plus Land registry fees totalling £50 for each project. The Council is happy to accept this quote from.

8. Cavendish Park & Pheasant Field Play Area Penyfai

In response to the Councils request for a meeting with Mr Guy Smith. He has kindly agreed to meet the Council on the 2nd November to discuss the progress on both Cavendish Park and the Pheasant Field. Mr Smith has also kindly agreed to attend a Council meeting on the 8th December to answer any other questions the Council might have.

9. Summer Floral Display 2020

Invoice Totaling £5,485.00 for the Installation/uplift, Maintenance, water and feed of the Councils floral displays.

10. One Voice Wales

An email was sent to update One Voice Wales of my appointment as Clerk to update their files.

11. Temporary footpath Closure BCBC

A temporary footpath closure for parts of footpath 19. Emailed to all Councillors.

12. Cllr Altaf Husain

Forwarded email from Bridgend County Borough Council regarding the Royal Navy's longest-serving Wren Barbara McGregor, she was presented with the area's Armorial Bearings to celebrate her retirement after 44 years of service.

13. Tondy and Aberkenfig Community Association

Cllr Claudette Evans copied the Council into a conversation with BCBC's parks department regarding the accumulation of rubbish in and on the slope to the rear of the Children's Play Park, leading to the Public Footpath in Pentre Felin.

14. Rights of Way Manager

A request of NHCC for their opinion regarding whether the Council feel that the resurfacing of sections of Footpath 11 Newcastle Higher would be of benefit to the local community and, if they do agree it is, whether they would be willing to consider contributing to the cost of the scheme?

15. Road Closure A4063

Information regarding a road closure at either side of the rail bridge on the A4063 between 23:00 on 12/12/2020 to 06:00 on 13/12/2020.

11. Planning

The Council noted the following applications made, with no comments.

T/20/66/TPO 1 Min yr Awel Penyfai Bridgend CF31 4GJ (30% reduction to oak tree)

P/20/762/FUL 79 Bridgend Road Aberkenfig CF32 9BA (Change of use of some floor space - Ground floor from B1a to A3 restaurant and first floor from A3 to C3 dwelling unit)

12. Reports from Councillors

Cllr Mal John, the Council has received a donated flag pole which has been placed at Aberkenfig square. The Council is expecting an invoice to the value of £600 for the work carried out.

The Chair Cllr Altah Hussain has suggested the Council look at their local area's Christmas lighting and report back to the Council within its next meeting. Cllr Altaf Hussain suggests we look into tendering a new contractor as the lights provided are to sub standard and believes it is something that can be improved upon for next year. The Clerk will contact local Town and Community Councils such as Llaliston, Pencoed and Lanharan who have fantastic illuminations this year.

Cllr Meryl Wilkins discussed her dismay that animal faeces has been reported outside Pen Y Fai school. The Council has agreed to contact BCBC making them aware of the mess and also asking for increased patrolling in the area.

13. Reports from Community Associations

There were none

14. Any Other Business

- (A) Cllr Mags Griffiths notified the Council that a resident in Aberkenfig has complained that the lane to the back of the bowls hall has been locked. Cllr James Radcliffe will look into who owns the land and report back.
- (B) Cllr Mal John discussed his dissatisfaction with a fellow Councillor. Cllr Heidi Bennet brought her concerns to the Council regarding the Old Bridgend Road. The Maintenance committee with delegated responsibilities agreed with BCBC that the Council will take responsibility for the clearing of the pathway. The work was carried out on the 2nd June 2020 and the 22nd June 2020. Cllr Heidi Bennet on the 19th June 20 publicly posting that she has not heard anything from the Council. By providing the correct information the Council hopes that Cllr retract their statement and provides a positive review of the work the Council has carried out at that location.
- (C) Cllr Meryl Wilkins updated the Council regarding Rock Cottage, the Councillor believes that rocks at the back of the cottages have gone missing. These rocks are part of a wall that are not part of the home owners land. The Council suggested that photographs be found or taken to prove that rocks are going missing.

There being no more business, the meeting closed at 8.35 p.m. The next meeting would be via video link, on Tuesday 12th January 2021.

Annual Review of Risks

Councils need to carry out an annual review of the effectiveness of their systems. This review is a part of improving governance and accountability, as Internal Audit is an integral part of the system of internal control.

For recent Audit years, the Internal Auditor produced a detailed report for the Council. The Clerk also verified the continued independence of the internal auditor, Mr David-Lloyd Jones, who confirmed that he was completely independent of the Council and its administration, and had no conflicts of interest. A letter of engagement which set out the scope of work was agreed as approved by the external Auditor and duly signed by both Clerk and internal Auditor in June.

The current general and financial risk assessment is as follows:

Newcastle Higher Community Council General and Financial Risk Assessment

The Council has carried out an assessment of the risks facing it and taken appropriate steps to manage these risks, including the introduction of internal audit controls and external insurance cover where required.

The Council has one cheque account and the signatures of two Councillors are required to sign cheques, and a payment must be recorded in the minute book. There are currently five signatories on the Council's bank mandate, Cllrs D G Baker, M John, A John, B Jones and MC Wilkins.

All cheques are signed at Council meetings unless the signatories are absent. If a cheque is signed outside a meeting, the clerk will request Councillors to sign, only if the expenditure has been previously authorised by the Council and if it is subsequently recorded in the minutes.

The Clerk retains the cheque book and bank statements but is not a signatory on the cheque account. The Councillors who can sign cheques have no access to the cheque book except through the Clerk, and the Clerk who holds the cheque book has no access to the money as he cannot sign a cheque. The signature of the Clerk is sufficient to transfer money from the high interest account to the current account, but not to remove money from either of the Council's accounts.

Petty cash is not held as all expenditure is by cheque. Any expenditure on stationery, copying and stamps, etc, is paid for by the Clerk personally and is reclaimed quarterly by cheque at a Council meeting.

Insurance cover - the Council has a fidelity guarantee with BIBA Insurance.

It is suggested that the full disclosure that is made to the Internal Auditor of all records will reduce risk. It may be worth considering the addition of insurance against the consequences of members defaming others or concerning members' behaviour to the policy.

The Council believes that these controls make the likelihood of financial loss or fraud very unlikely, and consequently a very low risk.

The Council has considered the risk of not electing sufficient members to conduct its operations, but given that there was competition for the places on the Council at the last election, this risk is low. Furthermore, there was competition in the Aberkenfig Ward for the 2017 Elections. The Council has considered the risk from liability from its website, but it is an informative document only, not interactive and is now managed by the new Clerk.

The Council has a clerk to help achieve its objectives, and a number of members who are active in their service to the community and the risk of loss of expertise within the Council to achieve its objectives also is low. NB This year the risk is higher but recruitment of a new Clerk is very likely to mitigate the risk. The new Clerk has now been recruited and will finalise the audit for 2020-2021.

The Council has considered potential risks and considered ways to mitigate or eliminate risks. It continues to review these annually.