



**THE COMMUNITY COUNCIL OF ABERTILLERY & LLANHILLETH  
CYNGOR CYMUNED ABERTYLERI A LLANHILEDD**

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Abertyleri, Blaenau Gwent. NP13 1AE.

Our Ref: **NOTICE OF MEETING**

4 August 2020

Dear Councillor


You are summoned to attend a meeting of Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council, to be held using video conferencing (Microsoft Teams) on **Wednesday 12 August 2020 at 7.00pm**. The agenda for the meeting is set out below.

All attendees, please be aware of your surroundings when attending this remote meeting and ensure any discussions which may be confidential are not conducted within earshot of other people. Further guidance on conducting remote meetings will be issued in due course.

Council meetings are restricted to two hours, unless the Council chooses during the meeting to suspend standing order 3(x), if it wishes the meeting to last beyond two hours.

Members of the Council have been provided with a link to join the meeting. If any member of the public wishes to join the meeting (until the point when the press and public are excluded), please contact the Clerk at the above email address by 10am on 12 August 2020, to discuss how the meeting can be accessed.

Yours sincerely



Richard Gwinnell  
Town Clerk

## **AGENDA**

- 1. Apologies for absence and welcomes**
- 2. Declarations of interest or dispensations**  
Members who consider that they have an interest to declare are asked to state the item in which they have an interest and the nature of the interest. Any member who is unsure should seek advice prior to the meeting in order to expedite matters at the meeting itself.
- 3. Minutes: Council: 26 February 2020 (attached)**  
To be confirmed as a correct record of the meeting.
- 4. Minutes – Finance and Grants Committee: 10 March 2020 (attached)**  
To be confirmed as a correct record (by the committee) and noted (by Council).
- 5. Minutes – Finance and Grants Committee: 1 June 2020 (attached)**  
To be confirmed as a correct record (by the committee) and noted (by Council).

- 6. Minutes – Human Resources Committee: 6 March 2020 (attached)**  
To be confirmed as a correct record (by the committee) and noted (by Council).
- 7. Minutes – Human Resources Committee: 12 June 2020 (attached)**  
To be confirmed as a correct record (by the committee) and noted (by Council).
- 8. Questions from the public:** To receive public questions and provide answers where possible
- 9. 2019/20 Accounts and Annual Return (attached):** To present the accounts including the annual return, annual governance statement and internal auditor's report for the year ended 31 March 2020 for approval and submission to Audit Wales.
- 10. Budget 2019/20 – Quarter 4 (out-turn) report (attached):** To inform Council of the financial position at the end of the 2019/20 financial year (in comparison to its budget).
- 11. ICT Strategy and Procurement (attached):** To inform Council of the current situation with regard to its information and communications technology and seek decisions to replace it.
- 12. Christmas Lights:** To consider a report from the working group and decide next steps.
- 13. Chair's announcements, relevant correspondence and Celebrating Success:** To receive announcements from or deal with correspondence raised by the Chair or officers, including reports on local achievements and successes.
- 14. Date and time of next meeting**
- 15. Resolution to exclude the press and public**  
Members are recommended to consider and resolve that, by virtue of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the press and public are excluded from discussions on the following items on the basis that disclosure thereof would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.
- 16. Complaints to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales – verbal update**

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF ABERTILLERY AND LLANHILLETH COMMUNITY COUNCIL  
(ALCC) HELD ON 26 FEBRUARY 2020 at 7.00pm  
in the Council Chamber, Mitre Street, Abertillery**

**PRESENT: Councillors:**

Gill Clark (Chair), Peter Adamson, Michaela Assiratti, Roger Clark, Tracey Dyson, Julie Holt, Mark Lewis, Beverley Lucas, Perry Morgan, Rob Phillips, Tracy Postlethwaite, Allen Rees, Nick Simmons, Glyn Smith, Bernard Wall and Graham White.

**Officers:** Steve Edwards, Deputy Clerk

**Others:** None

**ABSENT:** Councillors Vanessa Bartlett, Keri Bidgood, Gary Oakley

**198. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND WELCOMES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Vanessa Bartlett, Keri Bidgood and Gary Oakley.

Welcomes were extended to everyone present.

**199. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The Chair reminded members of the need to declare interests verbally and fill in a form.

No members declared any personal interests.

**200. MINUTES: COUNCIL – (a) 22 JANUARY 2020 and (b) 29 JANUARY 2020.**

The Chair reminded the everyone that the meeting was just checking on the accuracy of the minutes.

**Council RESOLVED:** that the minutes of the Council meetings held on (a) 22 January 2020 and (b) 29 January 2020 be confirmed as a correct record, for signature by the Chair.

It was stated by a Councillor Allen Rees that the copy of the minutes of the 11<sup>th</sup> December 2019 meeting on the website were the incorrect unamended minutes. The Deputy Clerk said that he would check and ensure the correct minutes for the 11<sup>th</sup> December Meeting were on the website.

**201. MINUTES: FINANCE AND GRANTS COMMITTEE – 13 JANUARY 2020**

The members of the Committee who were present confirmed that the minutes were correct

**Council RESOLVED:** that the minutes of the Finance and Grants Committee meeting held on 13 January 2020 be confirmed as a correct record.

## 202. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

There were no public questions for this meeting.

## 203. FINANCE ORDER

The Deputy Clerk presented the Finance Order. Councillor Graham White noted that there was a typographical error in Table 4, 3<sup>rd</sup> line from the bottom. "Riger Clark" should read Roger Clark.

### **Council RESOLVED:**

- (1) to note the payments listed in Tables 1 and 2 of the finance order
- (2) to authorise the payments listed in Table 3 of the finance order
- (3) to note the financial position on the current and reserve accounts

## 204. MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR TRACEY DYSON

*"That Council agrees to go ahead with Party in the Park 2020 on a date and venue to be decided by the Council's officers in consultation with the Leisure and Tourism Working Group and delegate authority to the Council's officers to make bookings and commit spend up to the £13,000 agreed as part of the 2020/21 budget."*

There was a discussion on the amount of officer's time that events may take up and some concern that the £20,000 that had been allocated in the 2019/20 budget for additional staff hadn't been spent and had been put into reserves.

**Council RESOLVED:** to agree the motion.

## 205. PROGRESS REPORTS/RECOMMENDATIONS FROM WORKING GROUPS

**Christmas Lights Working Group (CLWG):** None

**Leisure and Tourism:** No further update

**Shop Local:** The group were looking at putting on a Craft Faye in Jubilee Square at the end of March, it was also starting to plan a VE day event for Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> May and full costs would be brought back to the next Council Meeting. The Business Forum were in contact with the Highways Department concerning the short-term parking in Abertillery Town centre and the illegal parking on pavements in Market street which was blocking pedestrian access.

**Solar Farm:** A general report back on the money from the 2018 grant that was being spent on the Cwmtillery project. The Deputy Clerk reminded the meeting that organisations had until 31<sup>st</sup> March to complete their spending and the council would have to write a report back to Luxcara (the company that pays the Solar Farm Grant money) after that date. Councillor Allen Rees gave a brief update on the work going on at Cwmtillery Lakes and all is going well.

**Well-Being:** Report from Chair of Well Being, Councillor Nick Simmons that the initial good work that had taken place concerning Well Being had got very favourable comments from Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council last year. but other Councils were catching us up and we were now in danger of being left behind where we were once at the lead of Well-Being among the Town and Community Councils.

Councillor Rob Phillips raised the issue of weights for gazebos after the incidents at last years party in the park had highlighted the health and safety aspects of using gazebos in an area susceptible to wind gusts.

**Youth Engagement Group:** No further update

**Council RESOLVED** at this point:

(1) to purchase 40 weights to be used for gazebos for public events, with maximum cost of £1,000.

## **206. COMMITTEES TERMS OF REFERENCE**

Councillor Julie Holt reminded the meeting that everything we now do is subject to Well Being and should be subject to a cross mapping exercise. The Well-being Group would still like a headline project to call its own but did not want to run 6 individual projects.

**Council RESOLVED:**

- (1) To move Town in Bloom from the Leisure and Tourism working group to the Well Being working group
- (2) To move Fun Run, Toilets and Car Parking from the Leisure and Tourism working group to the Shop Local working group.

Councillor Rob Phillips left the meeting at this point.

Councillor Peter Adamson voiced concerns that (1) the chairs of the working groups were not changing and (2) there was a need for a planning group which consisted of all members. His comments were noted but no further action taken at this time.

## **207. COMMITTEE AND WORKING GROUP MEMBERSHIPS**

The Deputy Clerk stated that the following resignations had taken place since the last Council Meeting.

**Youth Engagement Group:** Councillor Julie Holt

**Shop Local Working Group:** Councillor Michaela Assiratti and Councillor Tracy Postlethwaite

**Well Being Working Group:** Councillor Tracey Dyson

No action was taken in replacing them and this would be dealt with at the Annual Meeting in May.

## **208. ELECTRONIC BANKING: CHANGES TO FINANCIAL REGULATIONS**

The Council considered the written report of the Deputy Clerk.

**Council RESOLVED** to amend the Financial Regulations in line with the Deputy Clerks report so that the first sentence in Section 6.15 would now read "Where internet banking arrangements are made with any bank, the Clerk/RFO and Deputy Clerk shall be appointed as the Dual Service Administrators".

## **209. FINANCIAL RISKS 2020/21**

The Deputy Clerk gave a verbal update. The Precept for 2020/21 would be paid in quarterly amounts from BGCBC. He was also finding it difficult to find another savings account that caters for not for profit organisations that did not already have a current account with the bank, to move our reserves to. He will continue his endeavours.

## **210. REPLACEMENT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (LDP) PREFERRED STRATEGY**

As per the resolution from the Council Meeting 29<sup>th</sup> January 2020, Councillor Nick Simmons brought further details back to the Council and there was a general discussion

Councillor Glyn Smith left the meeting during the discussion

**Council RESOLVED:** to get the Deputy Clerk to send a letter to Blaenau Gwent Council expressing the Councils disappointment about the proposals contained in the LDP as regards positive economic and other future developments in the Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council area. The letter to be sent before the cut-off date for the end of the consultation period, 27<sup>th</sup> February 2020. Councillor Peter Adamson would draft the letter based on his comments at the meeting. **Note: Councillor Julie Holt abstained from the voting.**

## **211. WALES AUDIT OFFICE (WAO): CONSULTATION ON FUTURE AUDIT ARRANGMENTS**

The Deputy Clerk reported on the plans for external audit arrangements being done by WAO, who want to instigate a three-year cycle. This would mean that every three years the Council would be subject to a deeper audit than usual which would involve greater costs and more staff time. He would keep council informed. Council noted the update.

## **212. TEAM BUILDING**

This was raised by Councillor Tracy Postlethwaite as she felt that the Council was divided and that this would be a good thing to bring people together. There was a discussion on the merits of a team building exercise and current state of the Council. The Deputy clerk was asked to bring back suggestions and costs later.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 as there was some concern on the whereabouts of Councillor Glynn Smith.

The meeting reconvened at 8:50, the Deputy Clerk had confirmed that Councillor Glyn Smith had returned home safely.

**213. ONE VOICE WALES (OVW). To consider renewing Council's membership.**

There was a view that the Membership of One Voice Wales was expensive, and some Councillors were not impressed by them. Councillor Graham White expressed concern that confidential Council Business about the Christmas Lights had been discussed at an OVW meeting, that OVW didn't represent Councillors and that Councillors didn't have a log in to the OVW website.

In a answer the Deputy Clerk stated that OVW was there to represent the Council, not individual Councillors, and that login details had been emailed to all Councillors.

**Council RESOLVED:** to renew the annual membership to One Voice Wales.

**214. REPORTS BACK ON RELEVANT TRAINING OR OTHER MEETINGS:**

It was mentioned about the Defence Discount Card which is like the emergency services Blue Light Card and it gives discounts in a number of shops for ex-service personnel. It costs £3 per year and further information can be got from Alyson Tippings at Blaeanu Gwent County Borough Council.

Councillor Perry Morgan had attended meetings concerning the loose sheep in the Bournville area, and that money had been made available for new fencing that should be erected in the next few months.

There was still an issue with illegal off-road biking and the bikers removing fencing to gain access. The police were working on some operational areas to combat this.

Councillor Tracy Postlethwaite stated that several Councillors had been in attendance at Llanhlillte Institute assisting in the flood aid work there so had not been able to attend other community meetings.

**Council RESOLVED** at this point to suspend standing order 3(x) to extend the time limit of the meeting beyond the normal two hours.

**215. CHAIRS ANNOUNCEMENTS, RELEVANT CORRESPONDENCE AND CELEBRATING SUCCESS:**

The Chair mentioned the St.Davids Day concert on Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> March and any volunteers to help would be appreciated.

Councillor Tracey Dyson asked for a congratulation letter be sent to Mia Caitlen, as she had organised a charity event at Ebenezer Church which had raised over £400 for WWF Australia.

The meeting ended at 9.15pm.

Signed as a correct record by the Chair .....

*NB these minutes are a summary of the proceedings and record of the decisions taken. They are not intended to be a verbatim record.*

*Minutes produced by Steve Edwards, Deputy Clerk*



**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND GRANTS COMMITTEE OF ABERTILLERY  
AND LLANHILLETH COMMUNITY COUNCIL (ALCC) HELD ON 10 MARCH 2020 at 7pm in  
the Council Offices, Mitre Street, Abertillery**

**PRESENT: Councillors:**

Nick Simmons (Chair), Gill Clark, Perry Morgan and Allen Rees

**Officers:** Steve Edwards, Deputy Clerk

**Others:** None

**222. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND WELCOMES**

Apologies received from Councillors Gary Oakley and Glyn Smith.

The Chair of the Finance and Grants had sent in his apologies, so the first order of business was to elect a chair for this meeting.

The Committee **RESOLVED** to elect Nick Simmons as Chair for this meeting.

**223. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Declarations were made during the meeting and are shown in the minutes when declared.

**224. GRANT APPLICATIONS**

- a) **Council Grant Application: MENASH (Mental Health Support Group).** This had come before the Committee previously and the officers had been asked to go back to the group to gather further information on the nature of the organisation (e.g. whether it was a national charity, how many beneficiaries there were and exactly what the £500 requested would be spent on). There was a reply dated 25<sup>th</sup> February from the group stating that the group was only based in Abertillery and that the £500 requested would be put towards craft material and equipment together with two day trips for its members. Each trip costs £300, so £600 for the year.

The Committee **RESOLVED to** (1) recommend to full Council that a Council Grant of £300 be awarded and (2) recommend to full Council that the maximum sum for a grant be removed from the Councils website as it was felt that organisations were automatically applying for that rather than consider what they actually wanted.

**The Committee RESOLVED:**

- b) That the ward grant application from Councillor Tracy Postlethwaite, for £200, for the Abertillery and District Museum be approved.
- c) That the ward grant application from Councillor Tracey Dyson, for £150, for the Abertillery and District Museum be approved.
- d) That the ward grant application from Councillor Keri Bidgood, for £100, for the Abertillery and District Museum be approved.
- e) That the ward grant application from Councillor Gill Clark, for £100, for the Abertillery and

District Museum be approved.

- f) That the ward grant application from Councillor Beverley Lucas, for £150, for the Ebbw Fach Choir be approved
- g) That the ward grant application from Councillor Roger Clark, for £200, for the Abertillery Bluebirds AFC be approved (Councillor Gill Clark declared an Interest, son and grandson are members of the group))
- h) That the ward grant application from Councillor Peter Adamson, for £100, for the Hospice of the Valleys be approved.
- i) To recommend to full Council that a Council Grant of £229 (the cost of the 3m BMS Folding Dew Brush) be awarded to Abertillery Bowls Club
- j) To recommend to full Council that a Council Grant of £300 (the same recommendation as for MENASH) be awarded to 275 (Nantyglo & Blaina) Squadron (Councillor Perry Morgan declared an interest, daughter is a member of the group)
- k) That the ward grant application from Councillor Perry Morgan, for £200, for the Bounville Community Centre be approved. (Councillor Perry Morgan declared an interest, he is a member of the group).
- l) That the ward grant application from Councillor Nick Simmons, for £200, for the Abertillery and District Museum be approved

The meeting ended at 7:30pm.

Signed as a correct record by the Chair .....

*NB these minutes are a summary of the proceedings and record of the decisions taken. They are not intended to be a verbatim record.*

*Minutes produced by Steve Edwards, Deputy Clerk*

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND GRANTS COMMITTEE OF ABERTILLERY AND LLANHILLETH COMMUNITY COUNCIL (ALCC) HELD ON 1 JUNE 2020 at 7.00pm by way of group conference (telephone) call**

**PRESENT: Councillors:**

Gary Oakley (Chair), Gill Clark, Allen Rees and Nick Simmons

**Officers:** Richard Gwinnell, Town Clerk and Steve Edwards, Deputy Clerk

**Others:** None

**ABSENT:** Councillors Perry Morgan and Glyn Smith

**225. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND WELCOMES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Perry Morgan.

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and outlined the voting process. He would outline each ward grant application and ask members individually to say whether they voted for, against or no vote.

**226. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Gary Oakley declared a personal interest in the ward grant application he had submitted (see 226 (2) below).

Councillor Allen Rees declared a personal interest in the ward grant application he had submitted (see 226 (3) below).

No other personal interests were declared.

**227. WARD GRANT APPLICATIONS**

The Chair read out the following table. Every member announced their vote. There were no votes against any of the applications.

**RESOLVED:** to approve the following ward grants:

No.	Organisation	Payee	From Councillor	Amount
1	The Food Cupboard Food Bank, Ebenezer Baptist Church, Park Place, Abertillery.	Ebenezer Baptist Church	Rob Phillips	£200
2	The Salvation Army Abertillery Corps Food Parcel Scheme and Community Help.	The Salvation Army, Abertillery Corps	Gary Oakley	£200
3	The Food Cupboard Food Bank, Ebenezer Baptist Church, Park Place, Abertillery.	Ebenezer Baptist Church	Allen Rees	£200
4	The Salvation Army Abertillery Corps Food Parcel Scheme and Community Help.	The Salvation Army, Abertillery Corps	Perry Morgan	£200

5	The Food Cupboard Food Bank, Ebenezer Baptist Church, Park Place, Abertillery.	Ebenezer Baptist Church	Julie Holt	£200
6	The Food Cupboard Food Bank, Ebenezer Baptist Church, Park Place, Abertillery.	Ebenezer Baptist Church	Tracey Dyson	£100
7	The Food Cupboard Food Bank, Ebenezer Baptist Church, Park Place, Abertillery.	Ebenezer Baptist Church	Peter Adamson	£100
8	The Salvation Army Abertillery Corps Food Parcel Scheme and Community Help.	The Salvation Army, Abertillery Corps	Peter Adamson	£100
9	The Food Cupboard Food Bank, Ebenezer Baptist Church, Park Place, Abertillery.	Ebenezer Baptist Church	Tracy Postlethwaite	£200
10	The Food Cupboard Food Bank, Ebenezer Baptist Church, Park Place, Abertillery.	Ebenezer Baptist Church	Glyn Smith	£100
11	The Salvation Army Abertillery Corps Food Parcel Scheme and Community Help.	The Salvation Army, Abertillery Corps	Glyn Smith	£100
12	The Food Cupboard Food Bank, Ebenezer Baptist Church, Park Place, Abertillery.	Ebenezer Baptist Church	Bernard Wall	£100
13	The Salvation Army Abertillery Corps Food Parcel Scheme and Community Help.	The Salvation Army, Abertillery Corps	Bernard Wall	£100
14	Blaenau Gwent Baptist Church Foodbank	Blaenau Gwent Baptist Church	Vanessa Bartlett	£100

NB Councillor Gary Oakley did not vote on application 2 above.

NB Councillor Allen Rees did not vote on application 3 above.

The Clerk explained that ward grants could still be applied for later in the financial year if members wished. The deadline given previously, of 22 May, was for applications to be dealt with at this meeting, for urgent grants to foodbanks in the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Chair stated that he intended to submit a motion to Council, to double ward grants this year, to £400 per member, as some members had given their entire ward grants funds for the year to foodbanks and may wish to give more later for other communities. He felt this was a good idea and the Council had sufficient funds available without calling on reserves. Other members concurred.

The Clerk supported that idea in principle and reminded members that increasing the ward grants budget would be a decision for the Council, when a motion was received, in future.

The meeting ended at 7.22pm.

Signed as a correct record by the Chair .....

*NB these minutes are a summary of the proceedings and record of the decisions taken. They are not intended to be a verbatim record.*

*Minutes produced by Richard Gwinnell, Town Clerk*

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE HUMAN RESOURCES (HR) COMMITTEE OF  
ABERTILLERY AND LLANHILLETH COMMUNITY COUNCIL (ALCC) HELD ON 6 MARCH  
2020 at 9:15 in the Council Offices, Mitre Street, Abertillery**

**PRESENT: Councillors:**

Gill Clark (Chair), Tracey Dyson, Julie Holt, Rob Phillips and Allen Rees

**Officers:** Steve Edwards, Deputy Clerk

**Others:** None

**216. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND WELCOMES**

No apologies

**217. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No members declared any personal interests.

**218. RESOLUTION TO EXCLUDE THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**The Committee RESOLVED** to exclude the press and public from the meeting for the following items of business, by virtue of The Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, on the grounds that disclosure of the matters to be discussed would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of those matters.

**219. CLERKS ABSENCE**

The Deputy Clerk explained that the Clerk, Richard Gwinnell, is absent from the office due to sickness for at least one month, starting Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> February 2020, and that he could have up to 5 Months leave on full pay and an additional 5 months leave on half pay after that first period. In answer to a question from a Member the Deputy Clerk stated that the HR Committee had full delegated powers to make any decisions in the management of staff, which could include paying overtime, increasing hours or employing additional staff.

The employment of additional staff to cover the workload was discussed but it was agreed that the time taking to induct and develop anyone new would cost more time than the current Deputy Clerk just doing the work. The Deputy Clerk explained the current workload and he was asked if working additional hours would be acceptable to him, he agreed that it was in the short term.

**The Committee RESOLVED to:**

(a). Allow the Deputy to work up to a maximum of 14 hours per week as overtime, the Chair of the HR Committee would authorise such payments on production of timesheets

from the Deputy Clerk.

(b). to maintain the Office opening hours at 9:00am to 1pm and if the Deputy Clerk was working outside those hours there was no expectation that he would be contactable even if he was in the office.

(c). to adjust office opening hours on evening meeting days, the office would not be open in the mornings and would instead be opening from 3pm to 6pm.

(d). that on the return to work of the Clerk, the Chair along with one other member of the HR Committee would conduct a return to work interview with him to discuss his transition back to full time working hours.

**220. Discuss the process to deal with two grievances against members by an officer of council.**

Prior to the meeting the Deputy Clerk had presented to each member a Binder which contained the grievance complaints and the evidence that the officer, had compiled, He had each member sign a form saying they would keep the contents of the binders confidential and return them to the Deputy Clerk when the process was complete.

There was a great deal of concern that due to the nature of the grievance complaints and the people involved that any investigations and decisions that the HR Committee could make could be seen as not being impartial. The Deputy Clerk will report back via email of any progress and the HR Committee will only meet to make decisions or to discuss progress

**The Committee RESOLVED to:**

(a) Have this matter investigated by an external independent person.

(b) Instruct the Deputy Clerk to find an independent person to complete this investigation and bring back recommendations with estimated costs to the HR Committee

(c) Instruct the Deputy Clerk to write letters to all parties involved informing them that a grievance investigation is taking place and the and that the matter is being taken out to an independent person and the investigation is not being done by the HR Committee.

**221. To deal with a formal complaint by a Member against an officer of Council**

The complaint was in two parts.

*"Chair at the next meeting of the HR Committee I would like you all to discuss the matter of the Clerk not sending out to me all the relevant paper work for the meeting as laid down in the Local Gov Act, advice has been to me by OVW and SLCC"*

*"Also the Council Offices as the name implies are our offices we should not have to make an appointment to go into them the Clerk and Deputy Clerk work for the Councillors"*

For point one, the Deputy Clerk explained that under the Local Government Act 1972 “a summons to attend the meeting, specifying the business proposed to be transacted at the meeting and signed by the proper officer of the council, shall be left or sent by post to the usual place of residence of every member of council”. So, by the letter of the law it is only the summons and the agenda that must be posted, but this isn't really within the spirit of conducting effective council business.

For point two, the Deputy Clerk referred to the minutes of the Council Meeting of 18 April 2018, Item 282(3) where the Council had resolved that “officers be given plenary powers to take whatever steps are needed to improve security and protect staff, in the absence of any action by BGCBC”

**The Committee RESOLVED to:**

- (a) instruct the Proper Officers in future to send full papers, as well as the summons and agendas of meetings to the Member involved and to offer that service to any other Member.
- (b) retain the current arrangements where members had to make appointments to see officers.

The meeting ended at 10:20

Signed as a correct record by the Chair .....

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*Minutes produced by Steve Edwards, Deputy Clerk*





**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE OF ABERTILLERY AND LLANHILLETH COMMUNITY COUNCIL (ALCC) HELD ON 12 JUNE 2020 at 10.00am using Microsoft Teams video conferencing and (in the case of Allen Rees) a telephone on loudspeaker**

**PRESENT: Councillors:**

Gill Clark (Chair), Tracey Dyson, Julie Holt, Rob Phillips and Allen Rees

**Officers:** Richard Gwinnell, Town Clerk

**Others:** None

**ABSENT:** None

**228. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND WELCOMES**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. As one member had difficulty getting into the Microsoft Teams system, the discussion of the agenda commenced at 10.15am.

**229. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No personal interests were declared.

**230. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED** that, by virtue of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the press and public be excluded from discussions on the following items on the basis that disclosure thereof would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

Everyone attending confirmed that they were alone in the room from where they were attending the meeting.

**231. COMPASSIONATE LEAVE POLICY**

Members considered the ACAS advice and local council policy comparison, which the Clerk outlined.

Discussion ensued on the need to be sensitive and compassionate in the case of a family bereavement, taking individual circumstances into account and recognising that every individual dealt with bereavement differently and may need more or less time off work. The judgement of the circumstances was best made by the employee's line manager. If the employee went to the doctor, due to the stress of a bereavement, they were likely to be signed off sick for a month, but some people may feel able to return to work earlier or work from home or in other flexible ways. The Chair moved that the policy adopted by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council be adopted for ALCC, as it was the most appropriate.

**RESOLVED** (unanimously) (1) that the following compassionate leave policy be adopted

and compassionate leave be granted for ALCC:

*For Bereavement of a near relative – Up to 5 days with pay (including funeral), which do not need to be taken consecutively, however it should be taken in a reasonable timescale at or around the time for the bereavement. Also, recognises that employees may require a reasonable amount of time off when a close family member passes away in recognition of the emotional impact with further reasonable amount of time off when a close family member passes away. Further time off without pay or flexible working arrangements may therefore be granted at the discretion of the line manager.*

*Near relative is defined as: Husband, Wife, Partner, Mother, Father, Son, Daughter, Brother, Sister including "in-law", step and half blood relatives, by adoption, or a person who is otherwise solely dependent upon the applicant at that point in time.*

A query was raised about what would happen if the Clerk was in the position of needing compassionate leave. A councillor read the following quote from the Good Councillors Guide: "In law, the Chair has few special powers. For instance it is unlawful for a council to delegate decision making to any individual councillor and the Chair is no different". He expressed the view that the Clerk's line manager was the HR Committee.

Members and the Clerk explained that it was standard practice for the Clerk to go to the Chair (or Leader in some councils) for day to day "line management" checks or discretions (in situations such as compassionate leave or longer periods of annual leave) as there was no other more senior staff member for the Clerk to go to for "approval" and it took time (which would not be available in such sensitive and time critical cases) to organise meetings of the HR Committee (with three clear working days' notice). A member moved and the committee:

**RESOLVED** (unanimously) (2) that the Chair (or in his/her absence the Vice Chair) exercise the "line manager" discretion in relation to the Clerk.

## **232. OTHER MATTERS AFFECTING STAFF**

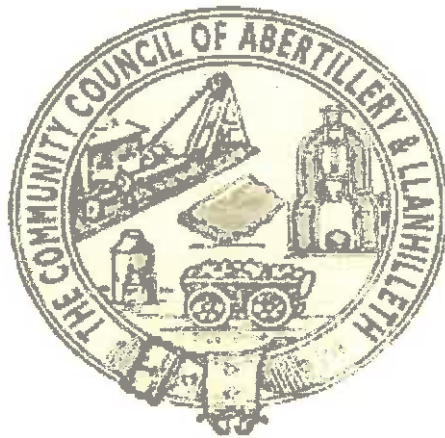
No other matters were raised for discussion at this meeting.

The meeting ended at 10.40am.

Signed as a correct record by the Chair .....

*NB these minutes are a summary of the proceedings and record of the decisions taken. They are not intended to be a verbatim record.*

*Minutes produced by Richard Gwinnell, Town Clerk*



**Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council**

**Report on 2019/20 Accounts and Annual Return**

**Authors: Richard Gwinnell (Town Clerk and Responsible  
Financial Officer (RFO)) and  
Steve Edwards (Deputy Clerk)**

**Date: 29 July 2020**

**For Council Meeting on 12 August 2020**

## Background

This report seeks Council's approval to the accounts for the 2019/20 financial year and their submission to Audit Wales, along with the Annual Governance Statement, Internal Auditor's report and other relevant documents. Audit Wales is the new name for the Wales Audit Office.

Under the Public Audit Wales Act 2004 and the associated Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014, accounts should be certified by the RFO and presented to the Council, along with the Internal Auditor's report, by 30 June in any given year. They should then be sent to Audit Wales, for external audit. This year, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and associated restrictions on people meeting each other, this deadline was not met. A public notice was published on 29 June 2020, explaining this.

Electors have a right under the legislation listed above to inspect and make copies of the accounts and relevant associated documents (e.g. bills, invoices etc) and submit questions and objections to the accounts (to Audit Wales) if they wish. In line with the amended timescales issued by the external auditors, the RFO will give notice on 16 August 2020 (or before) of electors' rights and the fact that electors may inspect the 2019/20 accounts from 1 September to 28 September 2020. If someone wants to inspect the accounts, this will have to be done by appointment made in advance, and with social distancing, given that Covid-19 infection is still a risk, meeting restrictions are still in force and the Council's staff are working from home and only visiting the office when required.

## Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2020

The Annual Return for the financial year 2019/20 (ending 31 March 2020) was completed by the Clerk and RFO on 27 July 2020 and is attached at **annex 1**. This is the form required by the Auditor General for Wales, which will have to be published in due course, showing the headline income and expenditure details, the Annual Governance Statement and the Internal Audit report.

## Internal Audit

The report (with appendices) of the Council's Internal Auditor, Mr Hugh O'Sullivan, is attached at **annex 2**. The Internal Auditor will attend the Council's remote meeting on 12 August 2020 to present his report and answer questions.

## Income, expenditure, bank reconciliation and variances

**Annex 3** shows the details of all income into all the Council's bank accounts. Particular things to note about income are: -

- 1: The Precept increased by £121,084 compared to the previous year, as decided by the Council on 16 January 2019.
- 2: Two Solar Farm Grant amounts of £35,000 each (totalling £70,000) were received in 2019/20 (not the usual one amount).
- 3: There was a single VAT reclaim of £3,706.12.

**Annex 4** shows the details of all Council expenditure for 2019/20. Particular things to note are: -

- 1: Staff costs were lower than expected in 2019/20 as the invoice for Quarter 4 was not received from Blaenau Gwent CBC (who provide the Council's payroll services) until after 31 March 2020.

2. Expenditure in 2019/20 was significantly higher than in 2018/19, because two Solar Farm grants (of £35,000 each) were paid out in 2019/20 and approx. £40,000 was spent for the first time on additional detached youth workers (among other things including higher Christmas lights costs).

**Annex 5** shows a formal breakdown of the accounts. Members should note that the figures shown in the top table “Annual Return” are the figures shown on the official Annual Return.

### **Account Summary**

At the start of the 2019/20 year, the Council had an opening balance of £33,108.46 in its current account. It received income of £305,295.40 and incurred costs of £231,334.19. £41,300 was transferred during the year from the Current Account to the Reserve Account. This resulted in a current account balance at the end of the year of £65,769.67.

Reserves were increased during the year by £41,300. £15,000 of this was to replace the £15,000 spent (using reserves) in 2018/19 on defibrillators. £20,000 was for additional staffing costs raised through the 2019 precept but not spent. £5,000 was to be earmarked for future external audit costs and £1,300 was unspent funds previously allocated for a pantomime. Reserves now stand at £61,678.45.

Overall, the Council had cash assets at the end of 2019/20 of £127,452.96 in three bank accounts. One account has only £4.84 in it. Whether that account is needed will be reviewed in future.

**Annex 6** is a bank reconciliation, showing the amount of cash at the bank (in all accounts) at 31 March 2020, minus liabilities which were outstanding at the time (i.e. uncashed cheques).

**Annex 7** is a variance statement. This highlights where there are significant differences between income or expenditure year on year and explains why those differences occurred.

**Annex 8** is an explanation of the assertions made in the Annual Governance Statement (which is part of the Annual Return). This explains in some detail why the RFO has pre-ticked the “yes” or “no” boxes on the Annual Governance Statement, as there is no “met in part” option.

### **Audit Wales: external audit**

Audit Wales (formerly known as the Wales Audit Office) currently hold our accounts for 2014/15, 2015/16, 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19 (five years). None of these have officially been signed off yet, pending the outcome of Audit Wales investigations into the 2014/15 accounts and a number of issues that arose during that year. It is highly likely that, even though we will shortly submit our Annual Return for 2019/20, they too will await sign-off by Audit Wales, until the issues which arose in 2014/15 are “put to bed”. Final accounts (following external audit certification) should be published every year by 30 September (and this will be later in 2020 due to Covid-19) but none of the accounts for the last five years (or this year) can be published as final accounts until the external audit is complete. The accounts for those years are however published as “unaudited” accounts.

### **Next Steps**

Council needs to approve the Annual Return (i.e. the accounting statements) including the Annual Governance Statement before they are submitted to Audit Wales. The Annual Return, the Internal Auditor’s report and the other attachments (income and expenditure details, bank reconciliation, variance statement, explanation of assertions etc) will then be submitted to Audit Wales, along with any other evidence they require (e.g. dates of all meetings of Council and committees during the year and the Council’s website address).

The Chair of the Council will sign page 4 of the Annual Return before it is submitted. The RFO has already signed the form, to certify that the accounting statements fairly present the financial position of the Council and its receipts and payments for the year.

Audit Wales will, in due course (the timescale is unknown and beyond the control of the Council) provide their external audit opinion on these accounts. The Annual Return can then be published in its final form on the Council's website. Pending external audit, they will be published as unaudited accounts at the appropriate time.

## **Conclusion**

The attachments to this report, read together, form the Council's Annual Return and Annual Governance Statement for the year ended 31 March 2020, as required by the relevant legislation.

This year (due to Covid-19) the accounts were not completed by 30 June (the normal timescale). However, they have been completed as soon as possible, in line with the new timescales issued by the external auditors. The external auditors will not "qualify" the accounts for lateness this year (as long as the accounts are approved by the Council by the end of August), as they recognise that all local councils in Wales are affected by delays caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and associated restrictions. Whether they qualify the accounts for other reasons remains to be seen.

In the opinion of the RFO, the Council should realistically expect that the external auditors will be particularly interested in this year's accounts (for 2019/20), because of the significant variances in its accounts compared to the previous year. The external auditors expect all variances of more than 10% to be explained when the Annual Return is submitted. The RFO has drawn up the required explanation of variances (annex 7) and this will be submitted to Audit Wales with the Annual Return. Nevertheless, ALCC's accounts for 2019/20 contain significant year-on-year variances which (in the opinion of the RFO) may cause the external auditors some degree of concern. As members will know from previous years, this could potentially result in significant extra work for officers and potentially significant costs (auditor fees) relating to the audit of accounts for this year.

## **Recommendations:**

- 1: That the Council agrees that the accounting statements shown in the report fairly present the financial position of the Council for the year ending 31 March 2020.
2. That the Annual Return, including the Annual Governance Statement and the Internal Auditor's report, be approved.
- 3: That the Council authorises the Chair of the Council to complete and sign the Annual Return on the basis of these accounts.
- 4: That the Council authorises the Clerk/RFO to submit the Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2020 and all relevant associated documents to Audit Wales as required.

Authors: Richard Gwinnell, Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer  
and Steve Edwards, Deputy Clerk

## LANGUAGE PREFERENCE

Please indicate how you would like us to communicate with you during the audit. Note that audit notices will be issued bilingually.

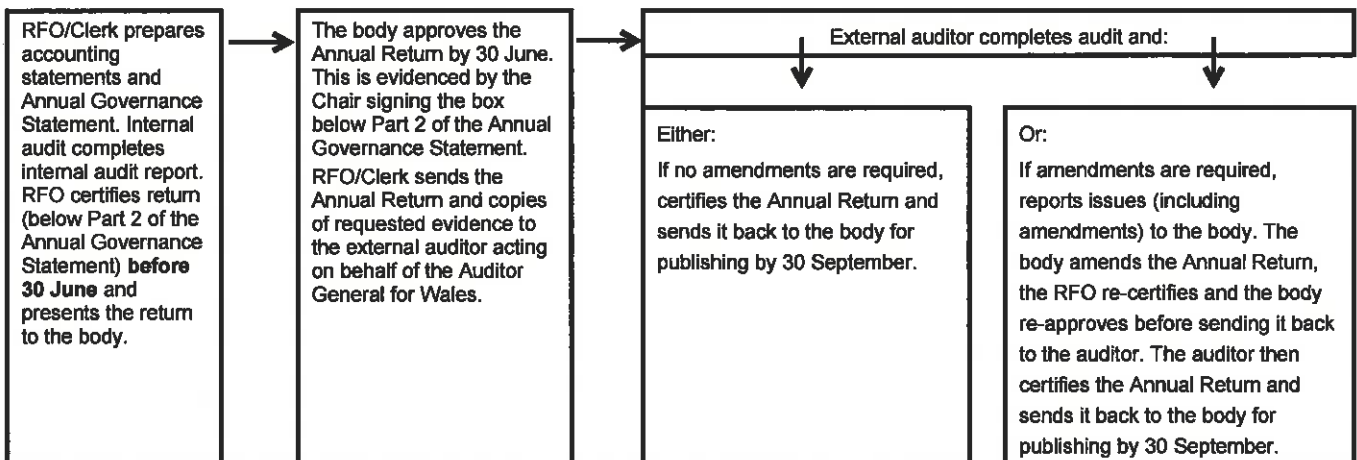
	Yes	No		Yes	No		Yes	No
ENGLISH	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	WELSH	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	BILINGUALLY	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## THE ACCOUNTS AND AUDIT PROCESS

Section 12 of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 requires community and town councils (and their joint committees) in Wales to make up their accounts each year to 31 March and to have those accounts audited by the Auditor General for Wales. Regulation 14 of the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014 states that smaller local government bodies i.e. those with annual income and expenditure below £2.5 million must prepare their accounts in accordance with proper practices.

For community and town councils and their joint committees, proper practices are set out in the One Voice Wales/Society of Local Council Clerks publication **Governance and accountability for local councils in Wales – A Practitioners' Guide** (the Practitioners' Guide). The Practitioners' Guide requires that they prepare their accounts in the form of an Annual Return. This Annual Return meets the requirements of the Practitioners' Guide.

The accounts and audit arrangements follow the process as set out below.



Please read the guidance on completing this Annual Return and **complete all sections highlighted pink** including BOTH sections of the Annual Governance Statement.

## APPROVING THE ANNUAL RETURN

There are two boxes for certification and approval by the body. The second box is only required if the Annual Return has to be amended as a result of the audit. You should only complete the top box before sending the form to the auditor.

The council must approve the Annual Return **BEFORE** the accounts and supporting documents are made available for public inspection under section 30 of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004.

The Auditor General for Wales' Audit Certificate and report is to be completed by the auditor acting on behalf of the Auditor General. It **MUST NOT** be completed by the Clerk/RFO, the Chair or the internal auditor.

Audited and certified returns are sent back to the body for publication and display of the accounting statements, Annual Governance Statement and the Auditor General for Wales' certificate and report.

# Accounting statements 2019-20 for:

Name of body: *Abertillery and Llanbelleth Community Council*

	Year ending		Notes and guidance for compilers
	31 March 2019 (£)	31 March 2020 (£)	

Please round all figures to nearest £.  
Do not leave any boxes blank and report £0 or nil balances.  
All figures must agree to the underlying financial records for the relevant year.

## Statement of income and expenditure/receipts and payments

1. Balances brought forward	43,550 <sup>0</sup>	49,706 <sup>0</sup>	Total balances and reserves at the beginning of the year as recorded in the financial records. Must agree to line 7 of the previous year.
2. (+) Income from local taxation/levy	112,916 <sup>0</sup>	234,000 <sup>0</sup>	Total amount of income received/receivable in the year from local taxation (precept) or levy/contribution from principal bodies.
3. (+) Total other receipts	7,924 <sup>0</sup>	75,080 <sup>0</sup>	Total income or receipts recorded in the cashbook minus amounts included in line 2. Includes support, discretionary and revenue grants.
4. (-) Staff costs	54,288 <sup>0</sup>	42,982 <sup>0</sup>	Total expenditure or payments made to and on behalf of all employees. Include salaries and wages, PAYE and NI (employees and employers), pension contributions and related expenses eg. termination costs.
5. (-) Loan interest/capital repayments	0 <sup>0</sup>	0 <sup>0</sup>	Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on external borrowing (if any).
6. (-) Total other payments	60,396 <sup>0</sup>	188,352 <sup>0</sup>	Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cashbook minus staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).
7. (=) Balances carried forward	49,706 <sup>0</sup>	127,452 <sup>0</sup>	Total balances and reserves at the end of the year. Must equal (1+2+3) – (4+5+6).

## Statement of balances

8. (+) Debtors and stock balances	0 <sup>0</sup>	0 <sup>0</sup>	<b>Income and expenditure accounts only:</b> Enter the value of debts owed to the body and stock balances held at the year-end.
9. (+) Total cash and investments	49,706 <sup>0</sup>	127,452 <sup>0</sup>	<b>All accounts:</b> The sum of all current and deposit bank accounts, cash holdings and investments held at 31 March. This must agree with the reconciled cashbook balance as per the bank reconciliation.
10. (-) Creditors	0 <sup>0</sup>	0 <sup>0</sup>	<b>Income and expenditure accounts only:</b> Enter the value of monies owed by the body (except borrowing) at the year-end.
11. (=) Balances carried forward	49,706 <sup>0</sup>	127,452 <sup>0</sup>	<b>Total balances should equal line 7 above:</b> Enter the total of (8+9-10).
12. Total fixed assets and long-term assets	206,015 <sup>0</sup>	206,015 <sup>0</sup>	The asset and investment register value of all fixed assets and any other long-term assets held as at 31 March.
13. Total borrowing	0 <sup>0</sup>	0 <sup>0</sup>	The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).

14. Trust funds disclosure note	Yes	No	N/A	Yes	No	N/A	The body acts as sole trustee for and is responsible for managing (a) trust fund(s)/assets (readers should note that the figures above do not include any trust transactions).
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

(24)



## Annual Governance Statement (Part 1)

We acknowledge as the members of the Council/Board/Committee, our responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control, including the preparation of the accounting statements. We confirm, to the best of our knowledge and belief, with respect to the accounting statements for the year ended 31 March 2020, that:

	Agreed?		'YES' means that the Council/Board/Committee:	PG Ref
	Yes	No*		
1. We have put in place arrangements for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>effective financial management during the year; and</li> <li>the preparation and approval of the accounting statements.</li> </ul>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Properly sets its budget and manages its money and prepares and approves its accounting statements as prescribed by law.	6, 12
2. We have maintained an adequate system of internal control, including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption, and reviewed its effectiveness.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge.	6, 7
3. We have taken all reasonable steps to assure ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and codes of practice that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of the Council/Board/Committee to conduct its business or on its finances.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Has only done things that it has the legal power to do and has conformed to codes of practice and standards in the way it has done so.	6
4. We have provided proper opportunity for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Has given all persons interested the opportunity to inspect the body's accounts as set out in the notice of audit.	6, 23
5. We have carried out an assessment of the risks facing the Council/Board/Committee and taken appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Considered the financial and other risks it faces in the operation of the body and has dealt with them properly.	6, 9
6. We have maintained an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems throughout the year and have received a report from the internal auditor.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Arranged for a competent person, independent of the financial controls and procedures, to give an objective view on whether these meet the needs of the body.	6, 8
7. We have considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on the Council/Board/Committee and, where appropriate, have included them on the accounting statements.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disclosed everything it should have about its business during the year including events taking place after the year-end if relevant.	6
8. We have taken appropriate action on all matters raised in previous reports from internal and external audit.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Considered and taken appropriate action to address issues/weaknesses brought to its attention by both the internal and external auditors.	6, 8, 23
9. Trust funds – in our capacity as trustee, we have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>discharged our responsibility in relation to the accountability for the fund(s) including financial reporting and, if required, independent examination or audit.</li> </ul>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Has met all of its responsibilities where it is a sole managing trustee of a local trust or trusts. 3, 6

\* Please provide explanations to the external auditor on a separate sheet for each 'no' response given; and describe what action is being taken to address the weaknesses identified.

## Annual Governance Statement (Part 2)

	Agreed?			'YES' means that the Council/Board/ Committee:
	Yes	No*	N/A	
1. We have prepared and approved minutes for all meetings held by the Council (including its committees) that accurately record the business transacted and the decisions made by the Council or committee.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Has kept and approved minutes in accordance with Schedule 12, Paragraph 41 of the Local Government Act 1972.
2. We have ensured that the Council's minutes (including those of its committees) are available for public inspection and have been published electronically.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Has made arrangements for the minutes to be available for public inspection in accordance with section 228 of the Local Government Act 1972 and has published the minutes on its website in accordance with section 55 of the Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013.

\* Please delete as appropriate.

### Council/Board/Committee approval and certification

The Council/Board/Committee is responsible for the preparation of the accounting statements in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014 and for the preparation of the Annual Governance Statement.

<b>Certification by the RFO</b> I certify that the accounting statements contained in this Annual Return presents fairly the financial position of the Council/ <del>Board/</del> <del>Committee</del> , and its income and expenditure, or properly presents receipts and payments, as the case may be, for the year ended 31 March 2020.	<b>Approval by the Council/Board/Committee</b> I confirm that these accounting statements and Annual Governance Statement were approved by the Council/Board/Committee under minute reference:
RFO signature: 	Minute ref:
Name: <u>RICHARD GUINNELL</u>	Chair of meeting signature:
Date: <u>27 JULY 2020</u>	Name:
	Date:

### Council/Board/Committee re-approval and re-certification (only required if the Annual Return has been amended at audit)

<b>Certification by the RFO</b> I certify that the accounting statements contained in this Annual Return presents fairly the financial position of the Council/Board/ Committee, and its income and expenditure, or properly presents receipts and payments, as the case may be, for the year ended 31 March 2020.	<b>Approval by the Council/Board/Committee</b> I confirm that these accounting statements and Annual Governance Statement were approved by the Council/Board/Committee under minute reference:
RFO signature:	Minute ref:
Name:	Chair of meeting signature:
Date:	Name:
	Date:

## Auditor General for Wales' Audit Certificate and report

The external auditor conducts the audit on behalf of, and in accordance with, guidance issued by the Auditor General for Wales. On the basis of their review of the Annual Return and supporting information, they report whether any matters that come to their attention give cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met.

We certify that we have completed the audit of the Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2020 of:

### External auditor's report

[Except for the matters reported below]\* On the basis of our review, in our opinion, the information contained in the Annual Return is in accordance with proper practices and no matters have come to our attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met.

[[These matters along with]\* Other matters not affecting our opinion which we draw to the attention of the body and our recommendations for improvement are included in our report to the body dated \_\_\_\_\_.]

### Other matters and recommendations

On the basis of our review, we draw the body's attention to the following matters and recommendations which do not affect our audit opinion but should be addressed by the body.

(Continue on a separate sheet if required.)

External auditor's name:

External auditor's signature:

Date:

For and on behalf of the Auditor General for Wales

\* Delete as appropriate.

## Annual internal audit report to:

Name of body: **ABERTILLERY + LLANHILLETH COMMUNITY COUNCIL**

The Council/Board/Committee's internal audit, acting independently and on the basis of an assessment of risk, has included carrying out a selective assessment of compliance with relevant procedures and controls expected to be in operation during the financial year ending 31 March 2020.

The internal audit has been carried out in accordance with the Council/Board/Committee's needs and planned coverage. On the basis of the findings in the areas examined, the internal audit conclusions are summarised in this table. Set out below are the objectives of internal control and the internal audit conclusions on whether, in all significant respects, the following control objectives were being achieved throughout the financial year to a standard adequate to meet the needs of the Council/Board/Committee.

	Agreed?				Outline of work undertaken as part of the internal audit (NB not required if detailed internal audit report presented to body)
	Yes	No*	N/A	Not covered**	
1. Appropriate books of account have been properly kept throughout the year.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Insert text
2. Financial regulations have been met, payments were supported by invoices, expenditure was approved and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Insert text
3. The body assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Insert text
4. The annual precept/levy/resource demand requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process, progress against the budget was regularly monitored, and reserves were appropriate.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Insert text
5. Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked, and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Insert text
6. Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Insert text
7. Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with minuted approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Insert text
8. Asset and investment registers were complete, accurate, and properly maintained.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Insert text

SEE  
INTERNAL  
AUDIT  
REPORT

	Agreed?				Outline of work undertaken as part of the internal audit (NB not required if detailed internal audit report presented to body)
	Yes	No*	N/A	Not covered**	
9. Periodic and year-end bank account reconciliations were properly carried out.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Insert text
10. Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments/income and expenditure), agreed with the cashbook, were supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records, and where appropriate, debtors and creditors were properly recorded.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Insert text
11. Trust funds (including charitable trusts). The Council/Board/Committee has met its responsibilities as a trustee.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Insert text

SEE  
INTERNAL  
AUDIT  
REPORT

For any risk areas identified by the Council/Board/Committee (list any other risk areas below or on separate sheets if needed) adequate controls existed:					
	Agreed?				Outline of work undertaken as part of the internal audit (NB not required if detailed internal audit report presented to body)
	Yes	No*	N/A	Not covered**	
12. Insert risk area ADEQUATE CONTROLS EXISTED.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Insert text
13. Insert risk area	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Insert text
14. Insert risk area	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Insert text

\* If the response is 'no', please state the implications and action being taken to address any weakness in control identified (add separate sheets if needed).

\*\* If the response is 'not covered', please state when the most recent internal audit work was done in this area and when it is next planned, or if coverage is not required, internal audit must explain why not.

[My detailed findings and recommendations which I draw to the attention of the Council/Board/Committee are included in my detailed report to the Council/Board/Committee dated 3<sup>rd</sup> AUGUST 2020 ] \* Delete if no report prepared

### Internal audit confirmation

I/we confirm that as the Council's internal auditor, I/we have not been involved in a management or administrative role within the body (including preparation of the accounts) or as a member of the body during the financial years 2018-19 and 2019-20. I also confirm that there are no conflicts of interest surrounding my appointment.

Name of person who carried out the internal audit:	H. N. P. O'SULLIVAN
Signature of person who carried out the internal audit:	H. N. P. O'Sullivan
Date:	21/7/2020



## Guidance notes on completing the Annual Return

1. You must apply proper practices when preparing this Annual Return. Proper practices are set out in the Practitioners' Guide.
2. Make sure that the Annual Return is fully completed ie, no empty red boxes. Please avoid making any amendments to the completed return. If this is unavoidable, cross out the incorrect entries, make sure the amendments are drawn to the attention of the body, properly initialled and an explanation for them is provided to the external auditor. **Please do not use correction fluid.** Annual returns that are incomplete or contain unapproved and/or unexplained amendments or correction fluid will be returned unaudited and may incur additional costs. Ask your auditor for an electronic copy of the form if required.
3. Use a second pair of eyes, perhaps the Chair or a member, to review your Annual Return for completeness before sending the original form to the auditor.
4. Make sure that your accounting statements add up, that the balance carried forward from the previous year (line 7 of 2019) equals the balance brought forward in the current year (line 1 of 2020). Explain any differences between the 2019 figures on this Annual Return and the amounts recorded in last year's Annual Return.
5. Explain fully any significant variances in the accounting statements. Do not just send in a copy of your detailed accounting records instead of this explanation. The external auditor wants to know that you understand the reasons for all variances. Include a detailed analysis to support your explanation and be specific about the values of individual elements making up the variances.
6. Make sure that the copy of the bank reconciliation you send to your auditor with the Annual Return covers all your bank accounts and cash balances. If there are no reconciling items, please state this and provide evidence of the bank balances. If your Council holds any short-term investments, please note their value on the bank reconciliation. The auditor should also be able to agree your bank reconciliation to line 9 in the accounting statements. More help on bank reconciliations is available in the Practitioners' Guide.
7. **Every council must send to the external auditor, information to support the assertions made in the Annual Governance Statement even if you have not done so before.** Your auditor will tell you what information you need to provide. Please read the audit notice carefully to ensure you include all the information the auditor has asked for. You should send **copies** of the original records (certified by the Clerk and Chair as accurate copies) to the external auditor and not the original documents themselves.
8. Please do not send the auditor any information that you are not specifically asked for. Doing so is not helpful.
9. If the auditor has to review unsolicited information, repeat a request for information, receives an incomplete bank reconciliation or explanation of variances or receives original documents that must be returned, the auditor will incur additional costs for which they are entitled to charge additional fees.
10. **Please deal with all correspondence with the external auditor promptly.** This will help you to meet your statutory obligations and will minimise the cost of the audit.
11. **Please note that if completing the electronic form, you must print the form for it to be certified by the RFO and signed by the Chair before it is sent to the auditor.**

Completion checklist – 'No' answers mean that you may not have met requirements		Done?	
Initial submission to the external auditor		Yes	No
<b>Accounts</b>	Do the papers to be sent to the external auditor include an explanation of significant variations from last year to this year?		
	Does the bank reconciliation as at 31 March 2020 agree to Line 9?		
<b>Approval</b>	Has the RFO certified the accounting statements and Annual Governance Statement (Regulation 15 (1)) no later than 30 June 2020?		
	Has the body approved the accounting statements before 30 June 2020 and has Section 3 been signed and dated by the person presiding at the meeting at which approval was given?		
<b>All sections</b>	Have all pink boxes in the accounting statements and Annual Governance Statement been completed and explanations provided where needed?		
	Has all the information requested by the external auditor been sent with this Annual Return? Please refer to your notice of audit and any additional schedules provided by your external auditor.		
If accounts are amended after receipt of the Auditor General's report on matters arising		Yes	No
<b>Accounts</b>	Have the amended accounting statements been approved and Section 3 re-signed and re-dated as evidence of the Board's approval of the amendments before re-submission to the auditor?		

Internal Audit Report

Financial Year 2019/20

1. I set out below my Internal Audit Report for the financial year 2019/ 20, and I can confirm that I am able to certify the Internal Audit Return for submission to the Wales Audit Office (WAO).
2. However, Council will be aware that it is still awaiting the signing off by the WAO of several previous years accounts and this may result in a requirement to revisit previously submitted returns.
3. The Internal Audit Report at appendix A has been completed to comply with the Internal Audit requirements are set out in the WAO Annual Audit Return.
4. Appendix B to this report sets out some issues that this Council may wish to consider going forward, and highlights areas that the Council needs to address.
5. I should like to place on record my thanks to both your officers for the help and assistance given to me during the audit.

H. N. P. O' Sullivan CPFA

Internal Auditor

3<sup>rd</sup> August 2020





1. **Appropriate books of account have been properly kept throughout the year.**

Appropriate books of account were properly kept throughout the year.

2. **Financial regulations have been met, payments were supported by invoices, expenditure was approved and VAT was appropriately accounted for.**

The financial regulations, have been met, payments were supported by invoices, expenditure was approved and VAT was appropriately accounted for.

3. **The body assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.**

There is limited evidence of significant risks having been reviewed. Risk Management needs to be embedded within all operations of the Council. Some areas of activity did have Risk Assessments carried out.

4. **The annual precept/levy/resource demand requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process, progress against the budget was regularly monitored, and reserves were appropriate.**

The annual precept/levy/resource demand requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process although modified from previous years. Progress against the budget was regularly monitored, and reserves were appropriate. (also see Appendix B).

5. **Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked, and VAT was appropriately accounted for.**

With the exception of Allotment income all remaining income was fully received and accounted for properly. VAT was appropriately accounted for.

6. **Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.**

Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.

7. **Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with minuted approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.**

Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with minuted approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.

8. **Asset and investment registers were complete, accurate, and properly maintained.**

Whilst the asset register is maintained, it is not been reviewed for some time. Council should ensure that it is up to date and financial values appropriate.

**9. Periodic and year-end bank account reconciliations were properly carried out.**

Periodic and year - end bank account reconciliations were properly carried out.

**10. Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct account basis (receipts and payments/income and expenditure), agreed with the cashbook, were supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records, and where appropriate, debtors and creditors were properly recorded.**

Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct account basis, agreed with the cashbook, were supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records, and where appropriate, debtors and creditors were properly recorded.

**11. Trust funds (including charitable trusts). The Council/Board/Committee has met its responsibilities as a trustee.**

N/A

1 Annual Precept

The Council took the decision to increase its precept requirement for 2019/ 20 from £112,916 to £234,000 an uplift of £121,084 or 107.23% over 2018/ 19.

The methodology by which this decision was reached was different from that employed in previous years. However, it should be noted that the decision was ultimately agreed by Council, albeit by a majority.

The reasoning behind such a large increase was stated as in order to allow the Community Council to undertake additional schemes/ projects for the benefit of the people of Abertillery and Llanhilleth.

The increase was levied by the Council with little or no consultation with the Council Tax payers of the Community area and also resulted in the resignation of one Councillor over the size of the increase.

Whilst in principle increasing the Precept to deliver additional schemes/ projects has some merit the fact that there was no cohesive plan or list of schemes agreed by the Council has resulted in the additional monies not being fully utilised efficiently and effectively.

Indeed, this has further been compounded by the Council maintaining the Precept required for 2020/ 21 at the same level as 2019/20 (increased by inflation) but with no agreed spending plans in place. A problem further added to by the Coronavirus pandemic which has prevented the Council from meeting.

Therefore, Council should determine its spending plans going forward as a matter of urgency. This will then reduce the likelihood of funds being spent just because the money is available, when the Councils spending should be linked to the Councils forward plans and strategies.

Council would also need to consider the level of precept it requires going forward in light of current circumstances, and should also consider a consultation exercise with the Community Council, Council Tax payers to ascertain their views on proposed plans/ strategies together with associated precept costs.

## 2 Solar Farm Grant

The Council has been receiving monies from the Solar Farm Company Luxcara for the last couple of years, and the Council has distributed the monies available using various procedures/ methods.

In 2019/ 20 the Council drew up a new set of criteria to be followed, to allow for the distribution of the monies received and this criteria was to be followed for 2019/ 20 and subsequent years.

Unfortunately, there then occurred a series of very difficult meetings, which included the Council:

1. Overruling the advice given to it by the Clerk to the Council on the decision to make the 5-year rule retrospective.
2. Council having instructed the Clerk to obtain independent legal advice regarding the 5-year rule, then having received the advice choosing to ignore that advice and settling on its own interpretation that the 5-year rule would be applied retrospectively.

The independent legal advice states that this now has the potential to leave the Council open to a judicial review.

Therefore, in my view the Council needs to review and establish as a matter of urgency the full criteria and definitions that it is going to use going forward. They should also publicise the criteria so as to avoid any misinterpretation.

This is especially relevant for the distribution of the 2020/ 21 grant monies, if any are forthcoming, as the company to date has laid down strict deadlines for the distribution of the grant monies and there is the potential for the Council to lose this funding.

Council should also consider approaching Luxcara to establish whether or not they are prepared to vary their timescales for the distribution of the grant monies given the difficulties faced following the Coronavirus outbreak which has limited the operations, to date, of the Council.

### 3 Public Service Ombudsman Reports

In the period from January 2020 to the end of March 2020 an alarming total of 11 complaints have been made to the Public Service Ombudsman (PSO).

All 11 complaints have emanated either from Community Councillors or Officers of the Council. 8 reports to the PSO are from Councillors reporting fellow Councillors, 1 report is from a Councillor against an Officer of the Council, and 2 reports are from an Officer of the Council against 2 Members.

The complaints include:

1. Failure to disclose a personal interest.
2. A claim of discrimination.
3. Claims of bullying and harassment by both Councillors and Officers.

Of the 11 complaints the PSO has decided in 7 of the cases not to investigate further. 3 cases are currently being investigated and in 1 further case the PSO stated that it is not his office that should be investigating the complaint but that it should be referred to the Monitoring Officer at Blaenau Gwent Council for him to establish if any action should be taken.

My purpose of bringing this very serious situation to Council's attention is that this clearly indicates a breakdown in trust, respect and communication which can only be to the detriment of the effective and efficient running of the Community Council.

Council should address these issues urgently and overcome this barrier in order to ensure that the Council is well run and managed and therefore best able to serve the people of Abertillery and Llanhilleth.

#### **4 Youth Service Grant**

The Council provides a grant towards work carried by the Youth Service. There needs to be a clearer audit trail in existence in order to verify that the grant provided delivers the agreed outcomes and supports the numbers of recipients identified.

#### **5 Scheme of Delegation**

The Coronavirus pandemic has highlighted the need for the Council to draw up a Scheme of Delegation to ensure that it can continue to function when it is able to meet as a Corporate Body.

#### **6 Gratuity Account**

The Council maintains this small account on which there is no activity. Council should close this account and transfer the balance (£4.84) into its current account.

## INCOME

Date	From	Amount (Current)	Amount (Reserve)
19/07/2019	Pant y Pwdyn Allotments	£50.00	
06/12/2019	Chairs Charity (Party in the Park) and Allotments	£440.80	
20/12/2019	Community Green - Solar Farm Grant	£35,000.00	153.50 - allotments
09/01/2020	Chairs Charity from Carol Concert	£604.60	287.30 Chairs Chairity
26/04/2019	Precept	£234,000.00	
09/04/2019	Community Green - Solar Farm Grant	£35,000.00	
30/04/2019	Reserve Account Interest		£2.91
31/05/2019	Reserve Account Interest		£2.82
28/06/2019	Reserve Account Interest		£2.55
31/07/2019	Reserve Account Interest		£3.99
07/08/2019	VAT Reclaim (into Reserve Account)		£3,706.12
30/08/2019	Reserve Account Interest		£5.66
30/09/2019	Reserve Account Interest		£6.00
31/10/2019	Reserve Account Interest		£6.00
29/11/2019	Reserve Account Interest		£5.61
31/12/2019	Reserve Account Interest		£9.80
31/01/2020	Reserve Account Interest		£10.47
28/02/2020	Reserve Account Interest		£9.46
	Reserve Account Interest		

Anaex 3

**INTER ACCOUNT TRANSFERS**

19/07/2019	From Current Account to Reserve Account	£15,000.00
06/12/2019	From Current Account to Reserve Account	£26,300.00



**Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council  
CASH BOOK: 2019/2020**

[illegible]







The Community Council of Abertillery and Llanhilleth

Annual Return 2019/20	Year Ending 31-Mar-19 £	Year Ending 31-Mar-20 £
1. Balances B/F	43,550	49,706
2. (+) Annual Precepts	112,916	234,000
3. (+) Other Receipts	7,924	75,080
4. (-) Staff Costs	54,288	42,982
5. (-) Loan and In Repay	0	0
6. (-) Total other payments	60,396	188,362
7. (=) Balance Carried forward	49,706	127,452
8. (+) Debtors	0	0
9. Total Cash and Investments	49,706	127,452
10. (-) Creditors	0	0
11. Balances C/F	49,706	127,452
12. Total assets	206,015	206,015
13. Total Borrowing		
14. Trust Funds	No	

Account Summary - For the year ending 31st March 2020

	Capital Reserve Account	Current Account	Gratuity Account	Totals
Balance	16,593.61	33,108.46	4.82	49,706.89
<b>Income</b>				0.00
Precept		234,000.00		234,000.00
VAT Repaid	3,706.12	0.00		3,706.12
Bank Interest	78.72	0.00	0.02	78.74
Allotment Rent		203.50		203.50
Solar Farm Grant		70,000.00		70,000.00
Chairmans Charity Events		891.90		891.90
Uncashed Cheques from previous years		200.00		200.00
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>3,784.84</b>	<b>305,295.40</b>	<b>0.02</b>	<b>309,080.26</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>				
Staff Costs (not including payroll)		£42,992.65		42,992.65
Member/Staff Training		1,361.90		1,361.90
Insurance		760.24		760.24
Banking Charges		164.11		164.11
Discretionary Payments/Grants		173,083.26		173,083.26
Infrastructure/Admin		12,982.03		12,982.03
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>231,334.19</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>231,334.19</b>
<b>Inter Account Transfers</b>				
		15,000.00	0.00	
		26,300.00		
Balance	31-Mar-19	61,678.45	4.84	127,452.96



For Year 2019/20	Bank Reconciliation	
Current Account 05809673		
Bank Balance at 31/3/20		£71,869.67
Less OS Cheques 2019/20		
AYDMS (SF Grant)	7654	£5,000.00
B.Wall Members Allowance	7665	£150.00
G White Members Allowance	7669	£150.00
Soffryd Friendly Group (A Rees Ward Grant)	7682	£150.00
C.Wilkinson (Replacement for 7662)	7687	£300.00
Ebbw Fach Choir (B Lucas Ward Grant)	7701	£150.00
Abertillery Blue Birds (R Clark Ward Grant)	7702	£200.00
Total OS Cheques		£6,100.00
Adjusted Bank Balance		£65,769.67

Business Reserve Account: 10318917

Bank Balance at 5/3/20	£61,678.45
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Old Gratuity Account  
13017721

Bank Balance at 31/3/17	£4.84
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Total £127,452.96

No Reconciliation as no outstanding transactions on this account

No account Activity since 2014

Annex 6





# **Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council (ALCC) – Accounts Variance Statement**

Significant variances between the 2018/19 and 2019/20 Annual Returns are explained in the table below.

	<b>Year ending 31 March 2019</b>	<b>Year ending 31 March 2020</b>	<b>Variance</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Explanation of variance</b>
Annual Precepts	£112,916	£234,000	£121,084	107	The Council decided at its meeting held on 16 January 2019 to substantially increase its budget and precept, to pay for new services during the year (e.g. 6 additional detached youth workers in the area) and to replenish reserves spent previously on 10 no. defibrillators purchased (using reserves) in 2018/19, amongst other things. The papers for the budget meeting held on 16 January 2019 are on the Council's website, as are papers for later meetings, during which detailed spending decisions were made.
Other receipts	£7,924	£75,080	£67,156	847	The 2020 figure includes two amounts of £35,000 received from a local solar farm company, for ALCC to distribute as grants for local community benefit. In the normal course of events, one amount of £35,000 would be received each year, but the 2018 grant was in fact received in the 2019/20 financial year. The 2019 grant was also received in the 2019/20 financial year.
Staff costs	£54,288	£42,982	(£11,306)	21	The Council from 1 April 2019 used the services of Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (BGCBC) Payroll for its payments to staff, HMRC and pensions. The Community Council pays BGCBC quarterly in arrears. The fourth quarter invoice was not received until the new financial year, so only three quarters' staff costs were paid to the payroll service provider (BGCBC) during the 2019/20 financial year.

Total other payments	£60,396	£188,352	£127,956	212	<p>The 2020 figure includes £70,000 of solar farm grants paid out by the Community Council to community groups, for local projects. The 2019 figure does not.</p> <p>The 2020 figure also includes approx. £40,000 spent for the first time in 2019/20 on 6 additional detached youth workers in the local area.</p> <p>The 2020 figure also includes approx. £10,000 more spending on Christmas lights (than the previous year), This is because approx. half the bill in the previous year (£10,000) was not paid (because the contract was not fulfilled by the supplier).</p>
Balance carried forward	£49,706	£127,452	£77,746	156	<p>The Council has underspent during 2019/20, against its budget decided on 16 January 2019. It has not increased staffing capacity or used agency staffing as originally planned.</p> <p>The Council has however increased reserves during the year, from c£16.6k at 1 April 2019 to c£61.7k at 31 March 2020. Reserves are now more in line with the national guidance (that they should be a minimum of three months' gross expenditure).</p>
Total cash and investments	£49,706	£127,452	£77,746	156	As above
Balances carried forward	£49,706	£127,452	£77,746	156	As above

Richard Gwinnell  
Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer  
29 July 2020

**Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council (ALCC): Explanation of Assertions made in the Annual Governance Statement for the year ending 31 March 2020**

<b>Assertion</b>	<b>"YES" means the Council:</b>	<b>ALCC response</b>	<b>Further explanation</b>
<p>1. We have put in place arrangements for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• effective financial management during the year; and</li> <li>• the preparation and approval of the accounting statements.</li> </ul>	<p>Properly sets its budget and manages its money and prepares and approves its accounting statements as prescribed by law.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The Council has these arrangements in place. The budget for the year increased by over 100% compared to the previous year, with decisions taken later during the year on the spending of the increase. There could be questions about whether the Council considered spending "need" robustly enough, as opposed to "affordability". The underspend against the budget at year end may imply that the "need" for the budget increase and the capacity of the Council to deliver increased services was not adequately considered. The budget was monitored appropriately throughout the year and financial management was effective. Accounting statements were prepared and approved, but this was later in the year than usual, due to delays caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.</p>
<p>2. We have maintained an adequate system of internal control, including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption, and reviewed its effectiveness.</p>	<p>Made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The Council has adequate systems of internal control in place and they have been applied and kept under review by the staff. Standing Orders and Financial Regulations were reviewed during the year. Decisions have also been made about reserves, electronic banking and limiting the funds in the Council's accounts at any one time (e.g. by requesting quarterly instalments of the precept). The Council itself (councillors meeting collectively) has not undertaken a formal review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control.</p>
<p>3. We have taken all reasonable steps to assure ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and codes of practice that could have a significant</p>	<p>Has only done things that it has the legal power to do and has conformed to codes of practice and standards in the way it has done so.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The Council has complied with all relevant laws, regulations and other standards and there are no matters of non-compliance which could have a significant financial effect on the ability of the Council to conduct its business as far as it is aware.</p> <p>The Council did not complete the report required under S6 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 (the biodiversity and</p>

financial effect on the ability of the Council to conduct its business or its finances.			resilience of ecosystems duty report) on time but it did this after the year end (in June 2020). That however has no financial effect on the Council.
4. We have provided proper opportunity for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014.	Has given all persons interested the opportunity to inspect the body's accounts as set out in the notice of audit.	Yes	We have provided this opportunity, albeit later than in normal years, due to the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions. The Council complied with the timescales for 2020 which were issued in the audit notice (September rather than June 2020) for electors' rights.
5. We have carried out an assessment of the risks facing the Council and taken appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.	Considered the financial and other risks it faces in the operation of the body and has dealt with them properly.	No	The Council has proactively taken action to manage risks which have been brought to its attention during the year. For example, the RFO requested that the annual precept be paid to it in four equal quarterly instalments, to prevent the risk of the entire annual precept sitting in one bank account, when the Council may only be able to recover up to £85,000 under the Financial Services Compensation Scheme, if its bank failed. Risks have also been taken into account in relation to moving to electronic banking and running events (e.g. Party in the Park) for example. There has however been no single overall risk assessment carried out this year. This will need to be done in future.
6. We have maintained an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems throughout the year and have received a report from the internal auditor.	Arranged for a competent person, independent of the financial controls and procedures, to give an objective view on whether these meet the needs of the body.	Yes	The Council has a competent, independent internal auditor in place and has received a detailed report from the internal auditor on the accounting records and systems for the year under review. This report is attached to the Annual Return.
7. We have considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or	Disclosed everything it should have about its business during the year	Yes	This has been done and the bank reconciliation and financial statements at 31 March 2020 take account of any outstanding liabilities at year end (e.g. uncashed cheques).

transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on the Council and, where appropriate, have included them on the accounting statements.	including events taking place after the year end if relevant.		
8. We have taken appropriate action on all matters raised in previous reports from internal and external audit.	Considered and taken appropriate action to address issues /weaknesses brought to its attention by both the internal and external auditors.	Yes	Action has been taken on many matters raised previously by internal and external auditors. The Council has been transformed since the external auditor's representative last visited in November 2016. No written reports have been received since 2014 from the external auditor. Matters raised by the internal auditor have been addressed, such as the need to review the Financial Regulations (which was done in 2019), the need to review cash levels in the current account and the need to consider what level of reserves is appropriate. There are matters which have been raised by the internal auditor in the past which are still to be addressed fully, e.g. a review of the value of the Council's assets, a full risk assessment and quarterly bank reconciliations. These matters will need to be addressed in future.
9. Trust funds	Met its responsibilities as trustee.	Not applicable	The Council does not act as trustee for any trust funds.

Richard Gwinnell  
Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer  
29 July 2020





# **Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council**

**Full Year - 2019/20**

**Budget Report**

**Authors: Richard Gwinnell (Clerk) and Steve Edwards  
(Deputy Clerk)**

**Date: 16 July 2020**

**For Council**

**Background:**

It is part of good governance and reducing financial risks that Councillors who have the ultimate financial responsibility for the Community Council are kept informed on the budget situation.

One of the key elements of this is a report back from officers on how spending and income is performing against the budget that has been agreed. This is the final (FULL YEAR) quarter budget report for 2019/20 and covers the year from April 2019 to March 2020.

The Council agreed a budget at its 16 January 2019 meeting (**Annex 1**), which formed the basis of our precept request and the baseline numbers for comparisons in this budget report. We also came into the 2019/20 year in a healthy situation as far as finances are concerned with a Current Account balance more than £30k but reserves at only £16k.

**Report:**

The Budget setting process for 2019/20 was followed but what is unusual was that the set budget included a large amount, £78,000, that was unallocated as New Projects, and £20,000 allocated for additional staff costs without that being quantified.

**Important Note**

**The numbers shown in this report are to monitor our performance against our budget for 2019/20. A direct comparison should not be made with the numbers shown on the Annual Statement. There are items like the Solar Farm grant which is not part of our budget but is counted in our annual statement and the final quarter staff costs that are counted as part of this budget report but are not in the annual statement as the payment had not been made in the 2019/20 year. This budget report also takes no account of cheques that were issued at the end of 2018/19 and presented in 2019/20**

The overall spend for 2019/20 was **£217,911.83** against a budget of **£234,000**, so a **£16,088.17 underspend** for the year. **Please note** £20,000 (The additional staff costs which didn't materialise) have been moved to reserves, so are counted as being spent as far as the budget is concerned. This does include **£8,215.28** of unallocated New Projects spending which does highlight the need for proper budget planning, rather than have an unallocated pot which can be dipped into, which is what happened for the New Project spending.

All the factors that have gone into this are detailed in the attached spreadsheet (**Annex 2**). Underspends are shown in red in the spreadsheet

The main reasons for this are

- Staff costs are 3.99% under budgeted figure, mainly because the Deputy Clerk did not take his Pension enrolment until Feb 2020.
- The training costs for members and staff is under half that was budgeted for.
- Internal Audit Costs were lower than estimated.



- We will not pay Chairs Allowance which had been budgeted for
- Only 5 members claimed the members allowance.
- We did not spend the £2,000 allocated for public toilets.
- Council Grants were underspent.
- New Projects had a significant underspend.

### Council Grants:

This was an area of concern when the half year forecast was produced, but Council grants have lessened since that time and almost dried up in the last quarter of the year. The original budget was for £5,600 and £4,400 was moved across from the New Projects budget. So, Council Grants budget for the year was £10,000. We spent £4,356 for the full year for Council Grants, which means there was an underspend of £5,644 in this area.

### Christmas Lights:

Our original budget was for £20,000 and this was intended to cover the central Christmas lights contract we have in place with Centregreat. £5,000 was moved across from the New Projects Budget to the Christmas Lights Budget (this is shown within the budget report as an actual spend against new projects) as it was thought that some additional remedial/repair work may have to take place. This did not materialise. However, during the year Council decided to give three grants to groups within our area, so that they could manage their own Christmas Lighting, which totalled £6,000 and this is shown under Christmas Lighting, not Council Grants, which is why the whole Christmas lighting budget shows an overspend for the year.

For the new budget that was agreed for 2020/21 each of the three groups have their own allocated budget now and the Central Christmas Lighting budget for 2020/21 was increased to £25,000.

### Additional Items:

We have paid for additional items detailed below which were not considered as part of the overall budget process in January.

New Items (Not included in original Budget)	These are items not previously budgeted in budget passed by Council Jan 2019
Roman Builders - Removal of Christmas lights	£720.00
Roman Builders - Blue Plaque Install	£72.00
New Gazebos * 10	£1,299.90
New Tables * 10	£299.90
SWALEC Costs for Christmas Lights 2017 (previous Cheque lost)	£944.70
Sharon Mason - Honorarium (Council Decision 11/12/19)	£75.00
Perry Morgan Members Allowance 2018/19 - Replacement Cheque	£150.00
Gazebo Weights	£1,145.95
Door Entry phone in Chamber	£234.00

Meeting Room Table	£262.20
Andrew Davies - Shop Local Sleigh	£150.00
Mark Lewis - Paint and Brushes for Sleigh	£45.91
Mark Lewis - White Spirit for Sleigh	£1.80
<b>Total</b>	<b>£5,401.36</b>

### New Projects:

There was an originally allocated budget of £78,600, £4,400 moved into Council Grants, so final budget is £74,200.

We now have allocated spend of £65,984.91 which leaves a balance of £8,215.28 for new projects.

<b>NEW PROJECTS</b>	
Party in the Park	£11,583.45
Youth Engagement	£38,551.46
Defibs project additional	£3,600.00
Defibs Publicity	£1,840.00
Drone Video	£1,000.00
Website review	£1,410.00
Additional Christmas lights Funding	£5,000.00
Ffindieu Tyleri	£2,000.00
Abertillery Rock and Blues	£1,000.00
<b>Total of new projects</b>	<b>£65,984.91</b>

### Reserves:

Reserves at the end of the year stand at £61,678.45. (£5,000 is ringfenced for external audit costs).

During the year we transferred in from the current account:

- The £15,000 that was taken from Reserves in December 2018 to pay for the Defibrillator Project.
- The £20,000 unspent additional staff costs.
- The £1,300 unspent Panto Costs
- £5,000 for previous years External Audit.
- We have also put £3,706.12 VAT reclaim direct into Reserves.

This means that unallocated reserves are £56,678.45, which is 23.61% of our overall 2020/2021 budget, so we still slightly under the minimum recommendation of reserves being at least £60,000 (25%) of our yearly budget.

### Budget Status:

There was a significant underspend of the 2019/2020 budget. There will always be a potential underspend built into our budget because of some statutory obligations around members allowances which are not claimed.

However, it is clear from that the Council must be a lot more rigorous when setting its budget for the year, in that it has a clear and costed plan for spending public money to avoid future underspending

The Council came into the year with a current account surplus of £33,108. and that surplus has now increased to £50,807. **NOTE:** The actual closing bank balance at the end of the year was £65,769 but the last quarter staff costs had yet to be paid.

Within the £50,807 is a ring-fenced amount of £1,200 which is money collected from events for the Chairs Charity, so the actual working surplus is £49,607.

While we should carry a small surplus, which would enable us to deal with contingencies our current surplus is too large, and we run the risk of an audit being critical of us holding public money which we have no plans to use. In the short term the recommendation is to move £35,000 from our current account into reserves until Council has a clear plan on how to use it, either to offset some of the 2021/2022 budget requirements (in other words to reduce the precept in 2021/2022) or to use it in another beneficial way for the Community.

In addition, we have an old "Gratuity" bank account, which currently has £4.85 in it. This is an account that was left over from many years ago and was used (until 2014) to build up a "pension" for previous officers. This account should now be closed, and the money transferred to our current account

#### **Recommendations:**

- 1: Note the end of year position.
- 2: Move £35,000 from the current account to the Reserve Account
- 3: Close the old Gratuity Account and move the funds over to the Current Account.



# **Budget 2019/20 - Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council**

Salaries: this assumes 1 part time (30 hours) Town Clerk and 1 part time (23 hours) Deputy Town Clerk							
Post	FTE (Full Time Equivalent)	Hourly rate	Weekly	Annual Actual	Employer NI Cont	Pension	Total Council Cost
1 Town Clerk NJC Spine Point 35 (Spine Points have been consolidated)	£37,849.00	£19.62	£588.54	£30,604.22	3,060.84	£5,508.76	£39,173.82
1 Deputy Town Clerk NJC Spine Point 23 (Spine Points have been consolidated)	£26,999.00	£13.99	£321.77	£16,732.04	1,147.19	£3,011.77	£20,891.00
Additional Staff Costs for Projects							£20,000.00
Totals				£47,336.26	£4,208.03	£8,520.53	£80,064.81

Training and subscriptions	
2 Memberships of SLCC	£450.00
Training Budget for Officers Including Conference Attendance	£1,200.00
Training Budget for members	£2,000.00
Totals	£3,650.00

Administration	
IT for MS365 for two members of staff	£200.00
Bank Charges	£210.00
Insurance	£650.00
One Voice Wales Membership	£2,350.00

Annex 1

Printing and photocopying usage		£700.00
Printer Rental		£1,300.00
Internet and Phone (BT)		£250.00
Web Hosting - Vision ICT		£250.00
Stationary and Postage		£1,000.00
Accountants (payroll)		£600.00
Information Commissioner		£40.00
Electricity from British Gas		£0.00
Internal Audit		£1,500.00
Travel and Mileage		£500.00
External Audit		£5,000.00
Welsh Water		£150.00
<b>Totals</b>		<b>£14,700.00</b>

<b>Council and Ward Donations</b>		
£200 per Councillor - Ward Donations		£3,800.00
Chairmans Allowance		£800.00
Council Grants		£5,600.00
Members Allowance (19*£150)		£2,850.00
		<b>£13,050.00</b>
<b>Environment and Lesiure all items</b>		
Xmas lights		£20,000.00
WinterFest		£2,000.00
Panto		£1,300.00
Contribution to Toilets		£2,000.00
Allotments		£510.00
War Memorial Maintenance		£1,500.00
Wreaths		£125.00

SWALEC Costs for Christmas lights		£1,500.00
Replenish Reserves - Defibrilator		
Project Costs		£15,000.00
Totals		£43,935.00

New Projects		£78,600.19
		£78,600.19

Overall Total

£234,000.00





Annex 2

Report of End Year - April 2019 - March 2020 by Steve Edwards

Expenditure	Agreed Budget for 2019/20	Actual	Variance £	Variance %	Notes
Budget Item					
Clerk Salary (Gross)	£30,604.22				
Deputy Clerk Salary (Gross)	£16,732.04				
Salary Gross (Both Officers)	£47,336.26	£47,471.52	£135.26	0.29	Small Variance as slight miscalculation on pro-rata rates
Pension	£8,520.53	£6,027.34	-£2,493.19	-29.26	Deputy Clerk did not take up pension option until Feb 2020.
Employer NIC	£4,208.03	£4,169.64	-£38.39	-0.91	
<b>Staffing Costs Totals</b>	<b>£60,064.82</b>	<b>£57,668.50</b>	<b>-£2,396.32</b>	<b>-3.99</b>	
2 * Memberships of SLCC	£450.00	£402.00	-£48.00	-10.67	SLCC Costs have increased, actual figures not known when budget set.
Training Budget for Officers	£1,200.00	£144.00	-£1,056.00	-88.00	No further expected Officer Training Costs
Training Budget for Members	£2,000.00	£1,217.90	-£782.10	-39.11	
<b>Training and Subscriptions</b>	<b>£3,650.00</b>	<b>£1,763.90</b>	<b>-£1,886.10</b>	<b>-51.67</b>	
Microsoft Office, 2 Licences	£200.00	£270.72	£70.72	35.36	This is the last year of yearly costs have we have purchased ongoing licences
Bank Charges	£210.00	£164.11	-£45.89	-21.85	
Insurance	£650.00	£760.24	£110.24	16.96	Council resolved at Meeting of 26/6/19 to go forward with renewal quote from Zurich. This also includes the premium for the Party in the Park event
Membership of One Voice Wales	£2,350.00	£2,624.00	£274.00	11.66	These costs are due to be paid in Q4
Printing and photocopying usage	£700.00	£895.79	£195.79	27.97	Printing has been higher than usual, because of the large numbers of papers and associated documents for meetings.
Printer Rental	£1,300.00	£1,259.56	-£40.44	-3.11	
BT (Internet and Phone)	£250.00	£252.16	£2.16	0.86	Paid by Direct Debit
Web Hosting - Vision ICT	£250.00	£246.00	-£4.00	-1.60	
Stationary and Postage	£1,000.00	£908.26	-£91.74	-9.17	
Payroll	£600.00	£600.00	£0.00	0.00	Payroll now done by BGCBC, costs are £50 per month
Information Commissioner Registration	£40.00	£35.00	-£5.00	-12.50	These costs due to be paid in Q4
British Gas - Electricity	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	0.00	We are in credit with British Gas for £490.75, so no payments being made.
Internal Audit Costs for 2018/19	£1,500.00	£1,212.60	-£287.40	-19.16	
Travel and Mileage	£500.00	£172.35	-£327.65	-65.53	Staff and Members Mileage

External Audit Costs	£5,000.00	£5,000.00	£0.00	0.00	Actual Costs are unknown at this time, £5,000 transferred to reserves and ring fenced
Welsh Water (Factory Unit)	£150.00	£115.64	-£34.36	-22.91	
<b>Admin Totals</b>	<b>£14,700.00</b>	<b>£12,756.24</b>	<b>-£1,943.76</b>	<b>-13.22</b>	
Ward Donations @ £200 per Councillor	£3,800.00	£3,375.00	-£425.00	-11.18	
Chairmans Allowance	£800.00	£0.00	-£800.00	-100.00	Council resolved at Meeting of 15/5/19 not to pay Chairs allowance
Council Grants	£10,000.00	£4,356.00	-£5,644.00	-56.44	Decision made by Council 20/11/19 to increase Council Grants to £10,000 and take increase from the New Projects budget.
Members Allowance	£2,850.00	£750.00	-£2,100.00	-73.68	5 members took up payment in 2018/19
<b>Donation Spending</b>	<b>£17,450.00</b>	<b>£8,481.00</b>	<b>-£8,969.00</b>	<b>-51.40</b>	
Xmas Lights	£20,000.00	£24,900.00	£4,900.00	24.50	Christmas Lights grants to Swffryd, Llanhilleth and Brynithel. New Contract with Centrgreat for main area. £5k coming from new projects budget to offset the forecast overspend on in this area.
Winterfest	£2,000.00	£1,836.00	-£164.00	-8.20	£300 - Disney Characters, £265 - Owl sanctuary, £115 - Story Telling, £280 - Rodeo Reindeer, £40 - Ian Bradley (sleigh driver), £526 Glow Company, £350 Animal Encounters.
Panto	£1,300.00	£1,300.00	£0.00	0.00	No Money spent on Christmas Panto, transferred to reserves
Contribution to Toilets	£2,000.00	£0.00	-£2,000.00	-100.00	No planned costs for toilets
Allotments Rentals	£510.00	£542.00	£32.00	6.27	Increase in rental paid for Adam Street, increase is built into lease agreement, plus £10 to BGBC for Geli Crug
War Memorial Maintenance	£1,500.00	£1,405.00	-£95.00	-6.33	1st Quarter Costs include £265 for spring planting
Wreaths	£125.00	£310.00	£185.00	148.00	Wreaths and 55 lampost poppies
SWALEC Costs for Christmas Lights 2018	£1,500.00	£562.92	-£937.08	-62.47	Negotiation by Clerk over estimated costs as we had fewer lights for 2018
Replenish Reserves - Defibrillator Project	£15,000.00	£15,000.00	£0.00	0.00	Money moved to Reserve Account in Q2
<b>Environment and Leisure</b>	<b>£43,935.00</b>	<b>£45,855.92</b>	<b>£1,920.92</b>	<b>4.37</b>	
New Projects Staff Costs	£20,000.00	£20,000.00	£0.00	0.00	No additional staff costs have been identified, so £20,000 has been moved into reserves
New Projects	£74,200.19	£65,984.91	-£8,215.28	-11.07	£65,846.81 is Project allocated costs to date, see entries in blue shaded area below. Council resolved on 20th November to reduce the New Projects budget by £4,400 and give that amount to Council Grants
<b>Budget</b>	<b>£234,000.01</b>	<b>£212,510.47</b>	<b>-£21,489.54</b>	<b>-9.18</b>	
<b>Non Budgeted Items</b>		<b>£5,401.36</b>			See section in green below
<b>Overall Balance against Set Budget</b>	<b>£234,000.00</b>	<b>£217,911.83</b>	<b>-£16,088.17</b>	<b>-6.88</b>	

<b>NEW PROJECTS</b>			
Party in the Park	£11,583.45		
Youth Engagement group	£38,551.46		
Defibs project additional	£3,600.00	2 defibs and 1 box + AED Signs	
Defibs Publicity	£1,840.00	Leaflet printing, distribution (Dor to Dor) and	
Drone Video	£1,000.00		
Website review	£1,410.00		
Additional Christmas lights Funding	£5,000.00		
Ffindieu Tyleri	£2,000.00		
Abertillery Rock and Blues	£1,000.00		
<b>Balance of new projects</b>	<b>£65,984.91</b>		
<b>New Items (Not included in original Budget)</b>			
	These are items not previously budgeted in Council Jan 2019		
Roman Builders - Removal of Christmas lights	£720.00		
Romam Builders - Blue Plaque Install	£72.00		
New Gazebos * 10	£1,299.90		
New Tables * 10	£299.90		
SWALEC Costs for Christmas Lights 2017 (previous Cheque lost)	£944.70		
Sharon Mason - Honourarium (Council Decision 11/12/19)	£75.00		
Perry Morgan Members Allowance 2018/19 - Replacement Cheque	£150.00		
Gazeboo Weights	£1,145.95		
Door Entry phone in Chamber	£234.00		
Meeting Room Table	£262.20		
Andrew Davies - Shop Local Sleigh	£150.00		
Mark Lewis - Paint and Brushes for Sleigh	£45.91		
Mark Lewis - White Spirit for Sleigh	£1.80		
<b>Total</b>	<b>£5,401.36</b>		





*Agenda Item 11*

**Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council**  
**ICT (Information and Communications Technology)**  
**Report**  
**Steve Edwards (Deputy Clerk)**  
**Date: 30 July 2020**

**Background:**

The Abertillery and Llanhillteu Community Council consists two permanent members of staff and 19 elected/co-opted Councillors. The Officers are usually based in the Council Offices in the centre of Abertillery.

The current IT consists of 2 desktop computers that are almost 10 years old (install date is Oct 2010 and a laptop which is again over 5 years old. The data on the two desktop machines are regularly backed up to Google Drive. The free Google Mail is the current email system for the officers and for the Councillors.

Even before the current Covid 19 emergency it was clear that a review and subsequent upgrading of the Councils IT was required as the desktops being used are prone to freezing up on an ever-increasing basis and this situation will only get worse. Both machines are showing peaks of 100% processor utilisation during standard working (i.e. having a word document and a spreadsheet open at the same time) As well as the freezing on both computers which has caused 15-30 minute delays and in itself would be sufficient to require an upgrade there is now a very high risk of direct failure of one or both desktop computers with either the processors or more likely the Hard Disk Drives failing. If this was to happen it would leave the officers unable to perform their duties.

Experience with the laptop, when trying to access a simple spreadsheet in Council meetings has highlighted its total inadequacy, where it is virtually impossible to use for anything but the simplest tasks. Money (£2,250) has been put into the 2020/2021 budget for this purpose.

The Covid 19 situation, where officers are now working from home has also now thrown up further deficiencies in the current IT setup and the equipment being used. The deputy clerk is having to move his desktop computer in and out of the office, and the Clerk is using his own laptop. Both options are unsustainable as we see the no end to the current Covid 19 situation and the working patterns of the officers.

**Requirement:**

While writing any IT requirement it is easy to recommend the best, guilt edged solution, but there is a need to bear in mind that we are spending public money and a careful balance has to be struck between what would be perfect and what is needed for the efficient running of the Council in the conducting of its business and has some future proofing built in so we do not have to revisit this for the next 5 years..

The core requirements for the Councils IT is: -

1. Microsoft Office based applications, mainly MS Word and Excel, which include the occasional use of Powerpoint and Publisher.
2. The new electronic accounting system (RBS Rialtos).
3. Internet access, to run Gmail

4. Artweaver, graphical editing (this is required for putting images to the Council's Website).
5. Microsoft Teams for video conferencing

The first decision to be made is to have either laptops or desktops for the officers. Up until a few years ago desktops were always going to be the clear winner on pure performance, but that gap has narrowed to be almost immaterial now, and the Councils processing requirements does not require any high-end processing. It is also clear and what the current situation highlighted is for the ability of the Officers to work from any location. (The Deputy Clerk had to move his entire desktop from the office and the Clerk is using his own laptop). It may also be argued that the Council being a public body should be following family friendly policies and that will include the ability for staff, now and in the future to be flexible on where they can work. With all this in mind it is the recommendation that the Council purchase three laptops to replace the current 2 desktops/1laptop the Council currently has. This would give each officer a laptop, with one spare in the office which could be utilised by individual Councillors and provide a readymade substitute if one of the officers laptops was to fail.. We already hold three licences for Microsoft Office.

## **LAPTOP SPECIFICATION**

The specification for the new laptops should be minimum of: -

1. SSD (Solid State Drive) drive of 260GB. Storage space is not an issue but speed of booting up and accessing the data on the hard drive is, which is why SSD is recommended rather than the traditional mechanical HDD (Hard Disk Drive). SSD also has no moving parts so it has a lower energy consumption which means battery life is better and will also feed into a better eco footprint for the Council.
2. The screen should be at least 15", as they will allow ease of use. If a 17" screen can be accommodated within the budget that should be given some preference.
3. Processing power is a difficult one, as the chart at the link below shows, there are many to choose from. <https://www.notebookcheck.net/Mobile-Processors-Benchmark-List.2436.0.html> . As the processing power requirements are not huge it will be the RAM (Random Access Memory) size may be the determining factor and more important than pure processing power. The recommendation here would be for at least 8GB of RAM.
4. The laptop will need at least 3 USB ports (keyboard, mouse, USB memory stick), and a HDMI graphical port. This will allow a standard keyboard, monitor and mouse to be plugged into the laptop whilst the laptops are being used in the office. This may also give an added bonus that the officers may have a dual monitor system which has some advantages when working on more than one application at a time.
5. The laptop should have built in wireless internet connection as well as an ethernet port, which allows the versatility of using both methods to connect to the Internet Router.
6. All modern laptops have graphical displays and capabilities that will fulfil our requirements so there is no need to specify a minimum requirement.

7. Video camera and sound capability are almost standard now on modern laptops, this is an essential component so that video conferring can take place, using Microsoft teams.
8. Operating system should be Windows 10, the current system is Windows 7 and the current desktops run on Windows 7. Support from Microsoft ended for Windows 7 in January 2020, see their message below so it is now vital we upgrade to Windows 10.

"After 10 years, support for Windows 7 ended on **January 14, 2020**. If you continue to use Windows 7 after support has ended, your PC will still work, but it will become more vulnerable to security risks and viruses because you will no longer receive software updates, including security updates, from Microsoft"

The transferring of data and setting up of applications can be done by the officers in-house so the laptops can be bought off-the shelf. There would need to be some liaison with CF Corporate who run the admin for our printer to enable access for both printing and scanning. New laptops should come with a minimum 12-month warranty and whilst consideration should be given to setting up an IT support contract it is not essential at this time. This does mean that Council would have to bear the costs of any future repairs, but this is not an onerous risk given the basic nature of the Council's IT requirement.

## **INTERNET CONNECTION.**

The Council currently connect to the Internet via a standard BT Internet Connection with a BT router in the office. There is no evidence to suggest this needs upgrading, but this may have to be reviewed if the Council decides to go down a fully cloud based data storage solution at any time in the future.

## **DATA STORAGE.**

The current data model is that each officer store data on their own local drives, this is backed up to Google Drive which both officers have access to. It would be of benefit that once the new laptops are purchased and connected that access to each other's local data storage be enabled by simply using the home networking capabilities of the BT router.

It may be too early to look at a more cloud based solution for Councils Data as there has not been any forceful drivers from members, and I do not think that there is a sufficient core of technological maturity within the majority of members to enable this. As a first step it could be considered that the Chair of Council and the Chair of Finance have access to some of the important Council data areas, but this needs to be carefully thought through before any decisions are made.

The two main data sharing companies within the UK are Microsoft and Google. The costs are shown below for their basic offerings, which also includes an email account and access to their Office suite of products (Note the Council already has 3 copies of Microsoft Office)

Microsoft 365 @ £4.56 per month, £54.72 pa per user (so for 21 users the overall yearly cost would be £1149.12).



Google G Drive @ £4.60 per month, £55.20 pa per user. (so, for 21 users the overall yearly cost would be £1159.20).

Members already have access to £150 pa Members Allowance which is there to assist with their running costs, but any central data sharing costs should be borne from with the Councils wider budget.

## **PRINTING**

There are no plans to change the printing or the printer that is in situ. It is a machine that works well, provides all the functionality that is required and now we are running on very reduced service charges.

## **MONITORS**

There are two separate issues here. The Council has agreed in its budget to procure a 65" wireless screen/monitor for use within the Council Chamber. The specification for this should include, Wireless, Bluetooth, HDMI and RGB connections so we should then be able to cover all connections requirements from Officers, Members and any visitors.

The second part is to replace the current old 17" monitors with 21" anti-glare monitors that are adjustable. This will enable work on large spreadsheets, help with glare and also being adjustable will be better ergonomically. We would only require two of these. They cost approx. £80 - £90 each.

## **MOBILE PHONES**

Both officers have official "pay as you go" mobile phones. Whilst they are basic in nature, they are sufficient for current requirements.

## **COSTINGS**

The estimated costing for budget purposes was £750 per laptop, having looked at what is available at the time of writing this report, this is at the high end and for the specification required we are looking at something below that (this will depend on what offers are available on the day we purchase the computers).

New Monitors cost £180

Carry bags for them can be absorbed within the stationary budget unless an offer is found that include carry bags that come with the laptops. While it is a small item, they are required to provide protection for a Capital Asset which will be moved around.

Current keyboards and mice are sufficient for purpose right now and are easy items to replace as, and when, they fail so there is no immediate requirement to upgrade these.

## **DISPOSAL OF OLD EQUIPMENT.**

- The old monitors to be kept as they can be used as spares
- The 3 old computers to be stored until such time as the officers are certain that all relevant data has been transferred to the new systems then have their

disks wiped (there are several free applications that will do that). The Deputy Clerk will sign off on the formal wipe of these systems so we can conform to any GDPR responsibilities before any actual physical disposal takes place.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**1: Council grant all necessary delegated powers to the Officers to urgently proceed to upgrade the ICT equipment in line with this report, within the £2,250 IT upgrade budget already agreed by Council**

**2: Council grant al necessary delegated powers to the Officers to proceed with the purchase and installation of the 65" Smart Monitor in the Council Chamber, within the £1,200 Smart Monitor budget already agreed by Council.**