

**MEETING OF THE FULL COUNCIL OF ABERTILLERY AND LLANHILLETH COMMUNITY
COUNCIL (ALCC) HELD ON 12 JANUARY 2022 AT 7.00pm
in the Council Chamber at Council Offices, Mitre Street, Abertillery and via video
conferencing (Zoom).**

PRESENT

Councillors: Gary Oakley (Chair); Nick Simmons (Vice Chair); Peter Adamson; Roger Clark; Rob Phillips; Glyn Smith; Bernard Wall; Graham White.

PRESENT VIA VIDEOLINK

Councillors: Tracey Dyson; Ben Owen-Jones; Jaqui Ledbury; Mark Lewis; Beverley Lucas; Barrie Page; Allen Rees; Mihangel ap Williams.

Officers: David Cartwright (Clerk); Steve Edwards (Deputy Clerk).

158. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND WELCOMES

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Michaela Assiratti, and Perry Morgan.

159. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

160. BUDGET 2022/23 - TO AGREE SPENDING FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2022/23

The Chair noted that the proposed budget had been generated from projections based on the 2021-22 budget plus proposals that had been scrutinised by the Planning & Environment and Leisure & Tourism Committees and the Youth Engagement Working Group. The proposed budget had then gone before the Finance & Grants Committee in December for line-by-line scrutiny.

Cllr Graham White stated that he did not accept that the agenda contained a written motion. Therefore, the Council could not debate the budget. The Clerk replied that the agenda was an almost exact copy of that for the Council's Budget and Precept meeting in January 2021, when the agenda items had been accepted as motions without dispute, and he believed that the high turnout at this meeting showed that all other Members accepted them to be motions. The Chair ruled that the agenda items would be accepted as motions.

Cllr Tracey Dyson, Chair of the Leisure and Tourism Committee presented the proposals for the budget lines that had been delegated to that committee. She reported that the committee had received hundreds of supportive responses on Facebook to a proposal to stage a Party in the Park event to celebrate HM The Queen's Platinum Jubilee in 2022. Excellent feedback had been received after the Community Council-funded free tickets for primary school children for a Drive-in Cinema event in 2021 and the committee proposed similar support in 2022. The committee also proposed investing in improvements to the Abertillery War Memorial plus accredited traffic management training and temporary traffic signage in preparation for the Remembrance Sunday parade. Cllr Dyson added that the committee proposed working with charities and community hubs on an initiative to combat loneliness across all age groups within the Community Council area.

Cllr Mark Lewis, Chair of the Planning and Environment Committee stated that he intended to move an amendment to increase the provision for Town In Bloom from £8,500 to £14,500 as the committee had received revised quotes for existing sites plus representations from local communities to expand the project to include additional sites. The committee proposed a fund to provide support for local organisations that had plans to install defibrillators in the Community Council area.

The budget also included provision for events to encourage increased footfall in Abertillery town centre as well as continued support for the Shop Local initiative.

Cllr Roger Clark questioned the provision of funds to Bourneville Community Centre for Christmas lights as, he reported, no such lights had been erected there in 2021. The Deputy Clerk advised that all aspects of the existing central Christmas lights contract plus the provision of Christmas lights grants to community organisations was due be reviewed by the Leisure and Tourism Committee in February 2022.

Cllr Ben Owen-Jones commented that the Community Council has a duty to provide information on a range of matters. The main way to do this was via its website, but the current Council website was not fit for purpose and not accessible. He stated that he intended to move an amendment to add £10,000 to the proposed budget to enable the funding of an initiative for new website design and provision that would include the involvement of a local community project.

Cllr Graham White stated that he believed the provision for professional fees of £10,000 plus the provision of £4,500 for Members allowances should be removed from the budget. The Clerk replied that it is a legal requirement for expenditure that is planned or expected to be included in the annual budget and that Members have a statutory right to claim allowances to which they are entitled. It would be potentially unlawful not to include these items in the budget.

Cllr Mark Lewis moved an amendment to the budget in respect of Town In Bloom.

Council **RESOLVED** to add £6,000 to the proposed budget in respect of Town In Bloom.

Cllr Ben Owen-Jones moved an amendment to the budget to accommodate website design and provision.

Council, **RESOLVED** to add £10,000 to the proposed budget in respect of website design and provision.

Council **RESOLVED** to agree an annual budget for 2022-23 of £339,533.66.

Cllrs Graham White and Roger Clark requested that the vote be recorded.

For: Tracey Dyson; Jaqui Ledbury; Mark Lewis; Beverley Lucas; Gary Oakley; Ben Owen-Jones; Barrie Page; Rob Phillips; Allen Rees; Nick Simmons; Glyn Smith.

Against: Roger Clark; Bernard Wall, Graham White.

Abstained: Mihangel ap Williams.

161. PRECEPT 2022/23 - TO AGREE THE ANNUAL PRECEPT REQUEST FOR 2022/23

The Deputy Clerk reported that the Council was forecast to underspend by more than £50,000 in 2021-22 and that it was customary for Members to take such an underspend into account when setting a precept.

Cllr Tracey Dyson stated that the Council currently had reserves of more than £96,000. Cllr Roger Clark questioned whether the Council needed such reserves. The Chair replied that the Council's reserves were equivalent to around 30 per cent of the budget for 2022-23. Guidance from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, which was incorporated into Welsh Government guidance in 2016, is that Community Councils should hold reserves equivalent to between 25 per cent and 100 per cent of their annual budget.

Council **RESOLVED** to request a precept for 2022-23 of £289,000.

Members thanked the Deputy Clerk for his work on the budget and his attendance at the meeting in view of his recent family bereavement.

162. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

26 January 2022.

The meeting ended at 8.20 pm.

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

Minutes produced by David Cartwright, Clerk.

Draft