

**MEETING OF THE FULL COUNCIL OF ABERTILLERY AND LLANHILLETH
COMMUNITY COUNCIL (ALCC) HELD ON 29 JUNE 2022 AT 7.00pm
in the Council Chamber at Council Offices, Mitre Street, Abertillery.**

PRESENT

Councillors: Nick Simmons (Chair); Tracey Dyson (Vice Chair); Peter Adamson; Michaela Assiratti; Roger Clark; Ben Owen-Jones; Barrie Page; Rob Phillips; Josh Rawcliffe; Glyn Smith; Mariola Walters.

Officers: David Cartwright (Clerk)

BY VIDEO LINK

Councillors: Beverley Lucas;

Apologies: Graham White.

Other: Mr Mark Lewis

32. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND WELCOMES

Apologies had been received from Cllr. Graham White. The Chair welcomed Mr Mark Lewis of Cwmillery, a former community councillor, who attended the meeting as a member of the public.

33. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST OR DISPENSATIONS

Roger Clark declared a prejudicial interest in Item 40 as he is a former Chair of Abertillery BG RFC.

34. Questions from the public

Mr Mark Lewis asked whether the Council's PlaCE Committee would, within the next month, update and position around the Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council area the Council's defibrillator location banners, to include all defibrillators in the community council area including those recently installed.

Rob Phillips, Chair of the PlaCE Committee, responded that the Committee had approached Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council for advice regarding consent for permanent signage for defibrillators.

The Clerk added that Blaenau Gwent Council would give consent only to signage that conforms to the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2016. The Council's defibrillator location banners were two metres square. It would cost approximately £1,000 to manufacture a single sign of this size that would conform to the Regulations. It would also be approximately ten times bigger than even the largest sign that would be likely to receive the necessary consent. Consultation with Blaenau Gwent Council about appropriate signage was likely to take some months.

Mr Lewis left the meeting at 7.07 pm.

35. Minutes – 25 May 2022

The Chair asked for the date of the meeting to be corrected. Subject to that amendment being made, the Council **RESOLVED** that the draft minutes were a true and correct record of the meeting.

36. Training

- a) The Council **RESOLVED** to agree and adopt the Council Training Policy and Plan.
- b) The Council **RESOLVED** to authorise the expenditure of up to £2,000 from the Council's Members Training budget.

The Clerk advised that the total cost would be likely to exceed this amount if Members took up all of the training offered to them. If so, he would return to a future meeting to seek authorisation for further expenditure.

- c) The Clerk reminded Members that 2021's Remembrance Day parade in Abertillery had been put in doubt because of the lack of personnel who were authorised to close roads under Chapter 8 of the Traffic Signs Manual. The proposal before the Council would enable up to ten people from both within and outside the Council to receive the necessary training. The Vice Chair stated that she had already received expressions of interest from two local community groups. Rob Phillips, who had recently completed the course, suggested that it would be of benefit to the local community if the Council sought to include some younger people in the training.

The Council **RESOLVED** to authorise the expenditure of up to £2,000 on Chapter 8 training for officers, Members and up to four representatives from local community groups.

37. Co-options

The Council considered the motion that the following should be added to the Council's Standing Orders:

A person who served as a Member of the Full Council during a council term shall not be co-opted as a Member of the Full Council during the following council term.

The Clerk stated that the item arose from a recommendation in the Final Report of the Welsh Government's Independent Review Panel on Community and Town Councils in Wales that Members should not be co-opted for more than one consecutive term. He drew attention to the fact that the wording of the motion would cover anyone who had been a Member during the previous council term and not just those who had been co-opted.

Ben Owen-Jones expressed his concern. The Council had five vacancies and he believed that the Council had a responsibility to seek to fill these by co-option. By restricting who would be co-opted, the Council could be viewed as trying to operate a 'closed shop'. The Review Panel's report had been published to guide Welsh Government policy and the Council should be very wary of cherry-picking one of its recommendations out of context with the rest of the report let alone accepting a motion that changed the meaning of that recommendation. He added that he would need assurance from someone with legal expertise before he would be convinced that the Council would be acting lawfully by amending the required qualifications of a person wishing to be co-opted.

The Clerk replied that eligibility to apply to be a community councillor was set down in law but the criteria for deciding whether an applicant should be co-opted was not prescribed – it was left to individual councils to decide. A change to Standing Orders – the Council's 'in-house rules' – would not affect an individual's eligibility to apply to be co-opted. It would lay down a criterion for how the Council would decide on applications.

The Vice Chair stated that it would be wrong for a Member to be co-opted back onto the Council if they failed to stand for election. The public should be given a chance to have their say about that councillor through the ballot box.

Peter Adamson pointed out that none of the recent community council elections had been contested. Any implication that any former-Member had not stood because they sought to avoid a fair electoral contest didn't match reality.

Rob Phillips believed that the motion amounted to changing the rules after the game had been played.

Roger Clark agreed that it would be much more sensible for such a change to Standing Orders to apply from the next community council elections onwards and not to be applied retrospectively to the recent elections.

Cllr Phillips proposed an amendment that the motion should apply only from the end of the current council term.

The Council **RESOLVED** to accept the amendment.

Ben Owen-Jones asked for the votes to be recorded.

For the amendment: Michaela Assiratti; Roger Clark; Tracey Dyson; Beverley Lucas; Barrie Page; Rob Phillips; Nick Simmons; Glyn Smith.

Against the amendment: Peter Adamson; Ben Owen-Jones; Josh Rawcliffe; Mariola Walters.

The Council **RESOLVED** that the following be added to the Council's Standing Orders:

From the end of the current council term [May 2027], a person who served as a Member of the Full Council during a council term shall not be co-opted as a Member of the Full Council during the following council term.

For the motion: Michaela Assiratti; Roger Clark; Tracey Dyson; Beverley Lucas; Barrie Page; Rob Phillips; Nick Simmons; Glyn Smith.

Against the motion: Peter Adamson; Ben Owen-Jones; Josh Rawcliffe; Mariola Walters.

38. Council email – Nick Simmons

Nick Simmons stated that Members had been targeted by 'spoof' emails purporting to come from fellow-Members. Anyone could create a gmail account with a very similar address to that of a Council Member in order to deceive. The Council was eligible to apply to use a gov.uk domain for its emails. Access to this domain was highly restricted.

The Clerk pointed out that use of a gov.uk domain would require the Council to subscribe to a centrally-managed, secure email system, the licences for which would require significant expenditure.

Rob Phillips stated that the current use of what were, in effect, separate, private gmail accounts by Members and officers raised data protection issues.

The Vice Chair and Roger Clark asked for assurances that the Council would procure support for Members to enable a smooth migration from current gmail accounts to a new domain.

- a) The Council **RESOLVED** that Members' email accounts shall be moved from a public

domain to a controlled domain.

Peter Adamson raised concerns as to the estimated costs of moving to a controlled domain.

The Clerk replied that the estimates were based on a quote received in 2021. The Council had asked an IT consultancy to investigate whether a more cost-effective hosted solution could be found that would still meet the requirements demanded for the use of the gov.uk domain.

- b) The Council **RESOLVED** to authorise the expenditure of up to £3,000 from the Members' IT budget.

39. Insurance

- a) The Council **RESOLVED** that its insurance policy with Zurich Municipal be renewed in line with that company's quotation schedule.
- b) The Council **RESOLVED** to authorise payment of the renewal premium.

40. Council Grant – Abertillery BG RFC

Roger Clark left the Chamber at 8.12 pm.

As Chair of the Finance and Grants Committee, Glyn Smith stated that the Committee had considered the application. The club had previously received significant financial support through the Council and the Committee was not satisfied that the application met the 'exceptional circumstances' that would justify the awarding of a Council Grant of more than £500.

The Vice Chair believed that recommendation to be short-sighted. The Council was building strong relationships with the club, which had signalled its intention to become more-and-more involved in community events. The application was for a grant for a concert that would attract people to visit the community council area and would boost the local economy. The grant would provide security for the event, which was a key issue for local residents.

The Council **RESOLVED** to award a Council Grant of £1,305 to Abertillery BG RFC.

Roger Clark returned to the Chamber at 8.21 pm.

41. Blaenau Gwent Standards Committee

The Council **RESOLVED** to nominate Roger Clark as the community councils' representative to the Committee.

42. Next meeting

27 July 2022

The meeting ended at 8.30 pm.