

**MEETING OF THE FULL COUNCIL OF ABERTILLERY AND LLANHILLETH  
COMMUNITY COUNCIL (ALCC) HELD ON 26 April 2023 AT 7.00pm  
in the Council Chamber at Council Offices, Mitre Street, Abertillery and via Videolink  
(Zoom).**

**PRESENT**

**Councillors:** Nick Simmons (Chair); Tracey Dyson (Vice Chair); Peter Adamson; Michaela Assiratti; Steve Bard; Chris Hill; Barrie Page; Rob Phillips; Deb Pitt; Josh Rawcliffe; Glyn Smith and Bernard Wall

**Via Videolink:** Ben Owen-Jones; Allen Rees.

**Officers:** David Cartwright (Clerk)

**Other:** Mr Mark Lewis

**Apologies:** Graham White

**Absent:** Mariola Walters

***The meeting was preceded by a minute's silence to mark the passing of Cllr Roger Clark whose death was announced on 26 March 2023.***

**1. APOLOGIES AND WELCOMES**

Apologies were received from Graham White.

The Chair welcomed Mr Mark Lewis, a member of the public from Cwmtillery, who attended the meeting via Zoom.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST OR DISPENSATIONS**

None.

**3. MINUTES – 22 MARCH 2023**

The Council **RESOLVED** that the minutes were a true and correct record.

**4. COMMEMORATIVE TROPHY**

Steve Bard reminded Members that the late Cllr Roger Clark made a significant impact on the sport of rugby in the community council area and beyond. He proposed that the purchase by the Council of a trophy – to be known as the Roger Clark Community Shield – to be competed for on an on-going basis by Abertillery BG RFC and Llanhilleth RFC would be a suitable commemoration of Cllr Clark's work. The Clerk noted that there was no guarantee that the two clubs' senior teams would be scheduled to meet in a competitive fixture in any given season and that it may be helpful if the Council allowed the two clubs to agree that the trophy could be competed for in a friendly match or by age-group teams where that was necessary to enable Cllr Clark's contribution to be commemorated. Steve Hill said that he favoured the purchase of a large shield trophy with many engravable plaques, as shown in the meeting's Notes and Appendices.

The Council **RESOLVED** to authorise (under Section 19 of The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976) the purchase of a large commemorative shield trophy to be named in honour of Roger Clark.

- a) The Council **RESOLVED** to authorise relevant expenditure by officers. Ben Owen-Jones asked that officers investigate whether a suitable trophy could be sourced locally for an

amount commensurate with the indicative price range shown in the meeting Notes and Appendices.

## 5. FINANCIAL AUDITS

- a) The Clerk drew Members' attention to the recommendations made by the Council's new internal auditor following an interim audit in March. As the Council carried a sizeable positive balance for much of the year, the internal auditor had suggested that the Council should investigate whether it would be beneficial to move funds to a suitable investment fund such as the Churches, Charities and Local Authorities (CCLA) Public Sector Deposit Fund. Similarly, there may be benefits in the Council moving its current account to a specialist provider such as the Unity Trust Bank. The Clerk stated that he intended to bring appropriate recommendations to the Finance and Grants Committee and Full Council in due course.

The Council **NOTED** the interim internal audit report and recommendations.

- b) The Clerk drew Council's attention to the external audit opinions published by Audit Wales on six years of Annual Returns submitted by the Council. Annual Returns for 2020-21 and 2021-22 had been submitted without an internal audit having been carried out. The Council's new internal auditor had offered to carry out internal audits of those two years' accounts. The Clerk intended to wait for the publication of Audit Wales's audit opinions on those two years, which were expected shortly. If Audit Wales offered a qualified opinion on those years because of the lack of internal audits, the Clerk would return to Council to recommend that IAC Audit be engaged to carry out those internal audits.

The Council **NOTED** the completion of external audits for 2015-2020 and the publication of Audit Wales's audit opinions.

## 6. FINANCIAL AUTHORISATIONS

The Clerk explained that the Council's Financial Regulations stipulated that a payment of more than £500 from a budget line managed by the Responsible Financial Officer required authorisation by Full Council or the appropriate committee. However, the Financial Regulations allowed Council to authorise for the whole year the payment of costs that arose from continuing contracts and those that were required by law.

- a) The Council **RESOLVED** to authorise the payment by officers of staff costs for 2023-24 as they fall due in accordance with Clause 5.6 of the Council's Financial Regulations.
- b) The Council **RESOLVED** to authorise the payment by officers of the following costs for 2023-24, which arise on a regular basis as the result of continuing contract, statutory duty or obligation, as they fall due in accordance with Clause 5.6 of the Council's Financial Regulations:

Rialtas accounting system  
Printing and photocopying  
Internet and phone  
Domain registration and licensing  
Stationery and postage  
External audit costs  
War Memorial maintenance

- c) The Clerk informed Members that the Council's Financial Regulations require the Clerk to report a 'material' overspend of any of the lines in the Council's budget. The Town in Bloom budget line, managed by the PlaCE Committee, was overspent by £1,396.22 in

the financial year 2022-23. This was because the then-Chair of the Committee had failed to include VAT in the costs of the main Town in Bloom contractor when proposing this item at the January 2022 budget-setting meeting. Steve Bard asked whether this called into question the prices quoted by the contractor during the Town in Bloom tendering process. The Clerk replied that the contractor's tender submission had made clear that "*all prices quoted are net and that VAT will be added at the standard rate at invoicing.*" Therefore, the error when setting the budget line for the financial year 2022-23 was entirely the Council's. He added that the technical overspend was somewhat academic as the Council will claim back the VAT.

The Council **NOTED** the overspend.

## **7. MEMBER RECRUITMENT**

- a) The Council **NOTED** that a Notice of Election for a councillor vacancy in the Cwmtillery ward had been published by the Returning Officer and that an election will be held on Thursday 25 May 2023.
- b) The Council **RESOLVED** to authorise the payment by officers of statutory election costs as they fall due.

## **8. COUNCIL GRANTS**

- a) The Council **RESOLVED** to authorise (under The Local Government Act 1972, Section 144) the payment of a grant of £477.24 to Abertillery and District Museum Society.
- b) Allen Rees noted that the grant application form completed by Mr Philip Collings (on behalf of Aiden Collings) did not include a signature and he believed that it was unwise for the Council to award a grant without the signature of the applicant. Cllr Rees quoted from an online blog that "An agreement without a signature is open, floating, ambiguous and extremely hard to enforce." The Clerk stated that there was no requirement in law or any of the Council's policies or procedures for a signature before the award of a grant could be made. Josh Rawcliffe noted that the application had been signed and dated electronically.

The Clerk stated that Members could award a grant to an individual but only where the expenditure "will bring direct benefit to their area or any part of it or some or all of its inhabitants." The Council would need to be of the opinion that a grant to this individual would bring a benefit to the wider community that was commensurate with the value of the grant. The Vice Chair said that she believed it was a very big benefit to Abertillery to have a young man representing the town in an international snooker fixture. Steve Bard proposed that the Council should arrange for publicity for Aiden's achievement and for the Council's funding. He believed that the value of such publicity for the community and for the Council would exceed the amount of the grant.

Deb Pitt left the Chamber at 7.45 pm.

Rob Phillips said that he believed that the Council should set a precedent that such a grant would be deemed to be of benefit to the wider community only when it supported an individual to compete at international level.

Deb Pitt return to the Chamber at 7.47 pm.

The Council **RESOLVED** to authorise (under The Local Government Act 1972, Section 137) to award a grant of £343.00 to Mr Philip Collings (on behalf of Aiden Collings) and that officers should invite Aiden to support them in publicising both his achievement and the Council's funding.

## 9. MEMBERS ALLOWANCES AND EXPENSES

The Clerk informed the Council that it was required by The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 to make policy decisions on a number of determinations in the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales annual reports for 2022-23 and 2023-24.

The Council was required to designate a role to be paid a Senior Role Allowance of £500. The Council **RESOLVED** to designate the Chair as the Senior Role for 2022-23 and 2023-24.

The Council **RESOLVED** that no other roles would be paid a Senior Role Allowance for 2022-23 and 2023-24.

The Council **RESOLVED** that no role would be paid a Civic Head Allowance for 2022-23 and 2023-24.

The Council **RESOLVED** that no role would be paid a Deputy Civic Head Allowance for 2022-23 and 2023-24.

The Council **RESOLVED** that no Financial Loss Allowance would be paid in 2022-23 and 2023-24.

Allen Rees left the meeting at 8.04 pm.

The Council **RESOLVED** that it would pay travel and subsistence at HMRC rates in respect of attending approved duties in 2022-23 and 2023-24.

The Council was required to choose how Members would be compensated for expenditure on office consumables in 2023-24. The Council **RESOLVED** that Members would be paid an annual allowance of £52 at the end of the financial year.

The Council **RESOLVED** that no Attendance Allowance would be paid in 2022-23 and 2023-24.

Michaela Assiratti left the Chamber at 8.09 pm and returned at 8.11 pm.

## 10. ONE VOICE WALES

The Council considered whether to re-join the representative organisation One Voice Wales, its membership of which had lapsed in Spring 2021. Glyn Smith stated that he was dubious about the value of re-joining One Voice Wales. Although it had given support to the Council on a number of occasions in past years, he was concerned that there had been occasions when One Voice Wales's advice had been contradicted by recommendations received from elsewhere.

The Council **RESOLVED** not to re-join One Voice Wales.

Peter Adamson asked how many votes had been cast in respect of the motion. The Clerk replied that four Members had voted in favour of re-joining One Voice Wales, eight had voted against and there had been one abstention.

## 11. NEXT MEETING

The Vice Chair proposed that the date of the Council's next meeting – its Annual Meeting – be brought forward from the last Wednesday in May to avoid coinciding with Whitsuntide and school half-term.

The Council **RESOLVED** that its Annual Meeting would be held on Wednesday 24 May 2023.

The meeting ended at 8.19 pm.