

**MEETING OF THE FULL COUNCIL OF ABERTILLERY AND LLANHILLETH  
COMMUNITY COUNCIL (ALCC) HELD ON 28 June 2023 AT 7.00pm  
in the Council Chamber at Council Offices, Mitre Street, Abertillery.**

**PRESENT**

**Councillors:** Tracey Dyson (Chair); Josh Rawcliffe (Vice Chair); Peter Adamson; Michaela Assiratti; Steve Bard; Chris Hill; Mark Lewis; Ben Owen-Jones; Barrie Page; Rob Phillips; Deb Pitt; Nick Simmons; Bernard Wall and Graham White

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

**Apologies:** Allen Rees and Glyn Smith.

**Absent:** Mariola Walters

*The meeting was preceded by a minute's silence to mark the passing of Mr Graham Bartlett, Clerk to the Council from 1989 to 2014, whose death was announced earlier in the month.*

**16. APOLOGIES AND WELCOMES**

Apologies were received from Allen Rees and Glyn Smith. The Chair welcomed Mark Lewis back to the Council.

**17. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST OR DISPENSATIONS**

Chris Hill declared a personal interest in Item 27 as he was currently Chairman of Six Bells Tennis Club.

Deb Pitt declared a personal interest in Item 23 as she was currently Senior Practitioner of Off The Streets. However, she noted that this appointment would end before the Council-funded Summer cinema events took place.

**18. MINUTES – ANNUAL MEETING 25 MAY 2023**

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

**19. 2022-23 ACCOUNTS AND ANNUAL RETURN**

As Responsible Financial Officer, the Clerk presented the accounts to the Council. He reminded Members that their votes in respect of the annual accounts were, in effect, public statements. A Member abstaining from agreeing the accounting statements would be making a public declaration that they didn't understand what the Council's financial position was on 31 March 2023. This could be because they believed that there is something significant in the accounts that has not been explained sufficiently. A Member voting against agreeing the accounting statements would be making a public declaration that they have evidence that the accounts have been falsified or that the real financial position has been deliberately obscured. They would be expected to spell out that evidence to other Members in the meeting before the vote was taken and to then report that evidence to the authorities.

The Clerk noted that, as the Council now reported its accounts on an income and expenditure basis, the 'Balances carried forward' sections of the Annual Return presented an accurate picture of the Council's financial position from year-to-year. When the 2021-22 accounts had been published, the Council had recognised that it was carrying more public money than it had planned and much more than it should have. The Clerk noted that the 'Balances carried forward' sections of the Annual Return for 2022-23

indicated that the excess public money being carried by the Council had “ballooned” still further during the financial year. The Clerk noted that the Council's internal auditor had yet to submit his report on the 2022-23 accounts. When that report was completed, it would be submitted to the next Full Council meeting. The Clerk had taken advice from Audit Wales who had advised that the Council's Annual Return should not be submitted to the external auditor until Full Council had considered the internal auditor's report.

Mark Lewis questioned why more than one payment had been made during the year in respect of insurance. The Clerk stated that the Council had increased its insurance cover during the year to take account of a professional valuation of the War Memorial statue, which necessitated a second payment in respect of the increased insurance premium.

Peter Adamson questioned why total expenditure on allotments had nearly trebled compared with the previous financial year. The Deputy Clerk explained that there had been significant costs associated with the reopening of the Gelli Crug allotments. In addition, there had been an increase in the lease fee that the Council paid in respect of the Adam Street allotments.

- a) The Council **RESOLVED** to agree that the accounting statements shown in the report fairly present the financial position of the Council for the year ending 31 March 2023.

The Clerk noted that Graham White had voted against agreeing the accounts. He reminded Cllr White that, if he had evidence of a material falsehood or concealment of facts in the accounts for 2022-23, he had a duty to make that evidence known to the meeting. Cllr White asked for the minutes to note that he was passing several pages of documents to the Chair. The Clerk stated that it was wholly insufficient to pass written material to the Chair – Cllr White had a duty to share any evidence that the accounts did not represent the Council's true financial position with the meeting. Cllr White said that he objected to the fact that the two previous years' accounts had not been subject to an internal audit and that Audit Wales had not yet published its audit opinions on the accounts for those years. The Clerk stated that Audit Wales was working its way through a backlog of external audits for hundreds of community councils. He noted that the documents passed to the Chair by Cllr White referred exclusively to the financial year 2020-21, they had nothing to do with the accounts for 2022-23 that were before the Council and that Cllr White had not provided the meeting with a shred of evidence of any falsehood or concealment of facts in the accounts for 2022-23.

Ben Owen-Jones questioned why any matters regarding internal or external audits of accounts for previous years had not been raised with the Finance Committee. The Chair asked Cllr White why, as a member of the Finance Committee until May 2023, he had not asked the Chair of the committee to call a meeting to discuss any concerns Cllr White had regarding the audit of accounts in previous years. Cllr White claimed that he had done so and he understood that the Chair of the committee had asked the Clerk to call a meeting of the committee, but the Clerk had not arranged one. The Chair replied that she could not believe that to be the case as she had asked officers on a regular basis to convene committee meetings and they had always done so immediately.

Steve Bard proposed that authorisation to sign and submit the Annual Return should only be given subject to the internal auditor's report confirming that the accounting statements were prepared on the correct accounting basis.

- b) The Council **RESOLVED** to authorise the Chair of the Council to complete and sign the Annual Return on the basis of the 2022-23 accounts, subject to approval by a future meeting of the Full Council of the internal auditor's report on the accounts.

- c) The Council **RESOLVED** to authorise the Responsible Financial Officer to submit the Annual Return, including the Annual Governance Statement, for the year ended 31 March 2023 and all relevant associated documents to Audit Wales as required, subject to approval by a future meeting of the Full Council of the internal auditor's report on the accounts.

## **20. BUDGET AND EXPENDITURE 2022-23**

The Clerk drew Members' attention to the Council's expenditure for the year to date. He gave his opinion that the Council would be financially secure if it had finished 2022-23 with total accounting balances of around £135,000. The Council's actual total balances at the end of 2022-23 were nearly £290,000. For the last five years, the Council had aimed to deliver more for the local community than they had paid for through their Council Tax. In the event, the Council had done the complete opposite – it had spent less than it had taken from the public.

The focus of the majority of Members was on funding more-and-more projects and initiatives that aimed to improve the quality of life in the community council area, but the Council's financial position so far in 2023-24 suggested that it was, again, not on course to deliver its planned expenditure. The Council needed to take action to deliver on its promises but it was unrealistic to expect Members to invest even more time in their Council duties and officers were already working substantial unpaid overtime.

The Clerk pointed out that the Council would have a turnover of more than £350,000 in 2023-24 and that this could rise to more than half-a-million pounds a year in the near future, yet it employed only two part-time staff. He suggested that Members needed to take action to investigate the viability of various options – whether that involved increasing the hours of current staff, recruiting additional officers or out-sourcing the delivery of some of its projects and initiatives. It also needed to start work now on setting a realistic, workable budget for 2024-25 that stopped the cycle of repeatedly taking more money off the public through the Council Tax and then not delivering what the Council had promised to deliver.

Steve Bard stated that oversight of the delivery of the Council's budget lay firmly with the Finance Committee. They should be talking to budget-holding committees and seeking answers regarding obvious underspends, yet the committee had not met since December. In his opinion, the committee should also have gone through the 2022-23 accounts before they were presented to Full Council and it should consider the report from the internal auditor as soon as it was delivered. He believed that the Finance Committee should meet as a matter of urgency.

Deb Pitt left the chamber at 8.05 pm and returned at 8.09 pm.

The Council noted expenditure for the year to date and agreed that meetings of the Finance Committee and HR Committee should be convened as soon as possible.

## **21. CHANGE OF BANKING ARRANGEMENTS**

- a) The Council noted the report from the Deputy Clerk, which considered alternative banking arrangements that would be a better fit for a community council of the size of Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council, following the advice of the Council's internal auditor.

Michaela Assiratti left the chamber at 8.12 pm and returned at 8.15 pm.

- b) The Council **RESOLVED** to authorise officers to take the necessary actions to close Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council's gratuity account and to transfer the balance to the Council's reserve account.

- c) The Council **RESOLVED** to authorise officers to take the necessary actions to transfer the Council's current and reserve accounts from Nat West to Unity Trust Bank.

## **22. INSURANCE**

The Council **RESOLVED** to authorise officers (under the Employers' Liability (Compulsory Insurance) Act 1969, the Local Government Act 1972 and the Local Authorities (Indemnities for Members and Officers) (Wales) Order 2006) to renew the Council's insurance policy with Zurich Municipal as per the company's renewal quote.

## **23. OFF THE STREETS**

Deb Pitt had declared a personal interest regarding this item but remained in the chamber to answer questions.

Cllr Pitt noted that Off The Streets intended to fund extensive sessions in the community across the days when Council-funded Summer cinema events took place. The initiative's involvement would, therefore, extend beyond the chaperoning of children and young people, for which it was seeking funding.

The Council **RESOLVED** to authorise officers (under Section 145 of the Local Government Act 1972) to pay Off The Streets £1,020 to facilitate the supervision and engagement of children and young people attending Council-funded Summer cinema events.

The Chair added that, as well as children and young people from the southern half of the community council area, the Summer cinema events would include sessions for children from the northern half of the area, arranged with the Blaenau Gwent Youth Team, and special sessions for families affected by autism.

## **24. GRANT APPLICATIONS**

- a) The Council **RESOLVED** to authorise officers (under Section 40 of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015) to pay a Council Grant of £500 to Chillax, Abertillery Learning Community.
- b) Graham White said that the Council should stop giving money to the same, limited number of organisations, such as Abertillery BG RFC. He asserted that events staged at the club were arranged by the Council and yet it was the club that profited by making a lot of money through the bar. The Chair and Steve Bard replied that Aber Rocks and the recent Slugfest event had nothing to do with the Council. The rugby club should be supported to stage independent events that benefited the local community.

The Council **RESOLVED** to authorise officers (under Section 19 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976) to pay a Council Grant of £1,000 to Abertillery BG RFC.

- c) The Council **RESOLVED** to authorise officers (under Section 19 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976) to pay a Council Grant of £505 to Clwb Llan.
- d) The Council **RESOLVED** to authorise officers (under Section 19 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976) to pay a Ward Grant of £200 to Six Bells Over-50s Club.
- e) The Council **RESOLVED** to authorise officers (under Section 40 of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015) to pay a Ward Grant of £100 to the Pauline Park Child Group.

- f) The Council **RESOLVED** to authorise officers (under Section 19 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976) to pay a Ward Grant of £200 to the Ebbw Fach Community Group.

## **25. COMMITTEES**

The Council considered a motion from Mark Lewis that he should be appointed as a member of the People and Communities Committee; the Planning, Commerce and Environment Committee; and the Finance Committee. The Clerk advised that this should be considered as three separate motions. The Vice Chair pointed out that the item offered an ideal opportunity for Members to propose amendments nominating themselves or others to any remaining vacancies on Council committees.

The Chair proposed an amendment that Michaela Assiratti should also be appointed to the People and Communities Committee.

The Council **RESOLVED** to appoint Mark Lewis as a member of the People and Communities Committee.

The Council **RESOLVED** to appoint Michaela Assiratti as a member of the People and Communities Committee.

The Council **RESOLVED** to appoint Mark Lewis as a member of the Planning, Commerce and Environment Committee.

The Chair reminded Council that members of the Finance Committee were mandated to complete the *Local Government Finance* training module within six months of their appointment to the Committee.

The Council **RESOLVED** to appoint Mark Lewis as a member of the Finance Committee.

## **26. INFORMATION FROM BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

The Council considered a motion from Mark Lewis that officers be instructed to collate the following information:

- The population breakdown in percentage terms for each individual ward in the Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council area;
- How many households there are within each ward area paying Community Council Tax plus the total amount of Community Council Tax that is paid by all these households;
- How many of these Community Tax-paying households have registered voters living in them.

Graham White interjected to complain that Council had not voted on a motion from the Vice Chair that all previous members of committees should be re-appointed for 2023-24. The Vice Chair stated that he had proposed nothing of the sort. He had merely suggested during discussion on the previous item that any Members who wished to be appointed to vacancies on any committee should propose amendments to that effect. Cllr White said that he had wanted to be appointed to a committee at the Annual Meeting in May but could not be because he did not attend that meeting. The Chair said that Cllr White had had ample time during the previous item to propose an amendment nominating himself to be appointed to vacancies on any committee but had not done so. The meeting had now moved to the next item on the agenda.

Nick Simmons and the Chair stated that Cllr Lewis could simply contact Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council as a member of the public and ask for the information he required. It was unnecessary to burden officers with the task. Cllr Lewis asserted that the

Deputy Clerk had provided the information for the Town in Bloom working group in the past. Nick Simmons responded that *he* had sourced that information by contacting the borough council himself. Deb Pitt added that the required information was freely available to anyone via the Welsh Government's StatsWales Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation website.

Cllr Lewis withdrew the motion.

## **27. SIX BELLS PARK TOILETS**

The Council considered a motion from Chris Hill to provide an annual grant to Six Bells Tennis Club for the running costs of providing public toilet facilities at Six Bells Park. Cllr Hill had declared a personal interest regarding this item but remained in the chamber to answer questions.

Rob Phillips left the chamber at 8.49 pm.

Ben Owen-Jones said that, as a wheelchair-user, he was acutely aware that the availability of good public toilet facilities with disabled access often made the difference between being able to get out-and-about and being forced to stay at home.

Chris Hill left the chamber at 8.49 pm.

Rob Phillips returned to the chamber at 8.49 pm.

The Chair reminded Members that the motion proposed that a grant be made annually.

The Council **RESOLVED** (under the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976) to authorise officers to pay an annual grant of £1740 to the Six Bells Tennis Club, being the running costs of providing public toilet facilities at Six Bells Park.

Chris Hill returned to the chamber at 8.51 pm.

Barrie Page left the chamber at 8.51 pm.

## **28. PARTY IN THE PARK**

The Chair reported on the 2023 event. She noted that the Clerk had undertaken considerable work on the day to assess the number of people attending the event and his report to members of the People and Communities Committee had concluded that it had been very successful, not only in attracting the target audience, but also, as a social event, in bringing the community together. Bernard Wall noted that, after the event had closed, many attendees remained in Abertillery long into the evening.

Barrie Page returned to the chamber at 8.52 pm.

Deb Pitt asked the Clerk to share his report with all Members of the Council. Steve Bard noted that, together with Aberfest and Slugfest, Party in the Park had helped to energise Abertillery in recent weeks. The positivity from local residents on social media was very apparent and increased local community involvement in activities such as floral planting and litter picking was noticeable.

Deb Pitt suggested that the Council should consider holding an additional, similar event in the southern half of the community council area in the future.

Peter Adamson left the meeting at 8.57 pm.

The Council **RESOLVED** to suspend Standing Order 3x to enable the meeting to continue beyond two hours.

Ben Owen-Jones left the chamber at 8.58 pm.

## **29. RESOLUTION TO EXCLUDE THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

The Council **RESOLVED** that, by virtue of The Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the press and public should be excluded from discussions on the following item 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.

Ben Owen-Jones returned to the chamber at 8.59 pm.

## **30. CHRISTMAS LIGHTS**

As Chair of the People and Communities Committee, the Chair reported that the committee had received presentations from three contractors. The committee recommended that the Council should appoint Blachere to a five-year contract. Steve Bard added that the company's bid did away with aluminium frames – which are energy-intensive to manufacture – used recycled materials and made use of LED lights that consumed only ten percent of the electricity of traditional bulbs. Graham White questioned why the contractor had quoted a substantial price for remedial work. Rob Phillips, who had advised the committee on the technical aspects of the bids, replied that a previous contractor had left a lot of redundant infrastructure and wiring that need to be removed. Sockets on columns needed to be replaced and catenary wires were corroded. In addition, the infrastructure needed to be checked and tested. He considered the quoted price for such extensive remedial works to be reasonable. Mark Lewis suggested that better Christmas lights displays should be provided in the north of the community council area and asked whether additions could be made to the contract. Barrie Page said that the proposed contract deliberately contained flexibility to enable changes or additions. Graham White asked for the contact details of the successful bidder as they may be of interest to Aberbeeg Tenants and Residents Association, which organises its own Christmas lights with funding from the Council.

- a) The Council **RESOLVED** to agree the appointment of Blachere as the contractor for the Council's central Christmas Lights contract, as per the recommendation of the People and Communities Committee.
- b) The Council **RESOLVED** (under Section 144 of the Local Government Act 1972) to authorise officers to take the necessary action to put the contract into effect and to make all subsequent contractual payments as required.

## **31. NEXT MEETING**

19 July 2023

The meeting ended at 9.07 pm.





**MEETING OF THE FULL COUNCIL OF ABERTILLERY AND LLANHILLETH  
COMMUNITY COUNCIL (ALCC) HELD ON 19 July 2023 AT 7.00pm  
in the Council Chamber at Council Offices, Mitre Street, Abertillery.**

**PRESENT**

**Councillors:** Tracey Dyson (Chair); Josh Rawcliffe (Vice Chair); Michaela Assiratti; Steve Bard; Mark Lewis; Barrie Page; Rob Phillips; Nick Simmons; Bernard Wall and Graham White

**Via videolink:** Chris Hill; Ben Owen-Jones.

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

**Apologies:** Peter Adamson; Deb Pitt

**Absent:** Glyn Smith

**Other:** Mr Paul Welch

**32. APOLOGIES AND WELCOMES**

Apologies were received from Deb Pitt. The Chair welcomed Mr Paul Welch of Cwmtillery, who attended the meeting as a member of the public.

**33. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST OR DISPENSATIONS**

None.

**34. MINUTES – 28 JUNE 2023**

Mark Lewis complained that he had asked a number of questions and made some statements during the meeting but that none of these interventions had been mentioned in the minutes. The Clerk reminded Members that the minutes were not a transcript of a meeting – they were the official record of decisions made. Comments made by Members were usually only included where they were indicative of the debate that led to a decision being made. The Chair added that Cllr Lewis needed to propose specific amendments to the minutes that Members could vote on. The Council agreed to the Clerk's suggestion that consideration of the minutes be deferred to the next meeting to give Cllr Lewis time to formulate appropriate amendments.

Chris Hill – who could neither hear nor be heard via his videolink – left the meeting at 7.14 pm.

**35. EMERGENCY MOTIONS**

The Chair informed the meeting that she wished to accept two motions from the Community Empowerment Committee that had not been included on the original agenda as both required decisions to be made before the Council's next scheduled meeting in September.

The Council **RESOLVED** to suspend Standing Order 9b to enable the two motions to be moved.

**a) Youth diversion scheme**

The Chair stated that The Blaenau Gwent Youth Team had been working with CSO Luke Davies of Gwent Police to formulate a scheme to divert some young people from the criminal justice system. The scheme proposed enabling identified individuals to attend classes with professional mixed martial artist Jack Shore in Aberbeeg.

Attendance would be compulsory and the classes would be dependent on the individuals staying free of drugs, alcohol and offending. In return, the costs of the classes (£43 per month) would be met by the scheme. A budget of £5,000 would give the Community Empowerment Committee the potential to fund up to eighteen individuals over a period of six months to enter the program as an alternative to the police bringing criminal charges.

The Council **RESOLVED** that a budget of £5,000 – to be managed by the Community Empowerment Committee – be allocated to fund a Blaenau Gwent Youth Team diversion scheme for young people who have been identified as being most at risk of entering the criminal justice system.

**b) Lo-Cost store site**

The Chair stated that the newly-formed Abertillery Aspiration Group had proposed an initiative regarding the abandoned Lo-Cost store site adjacent to Castle Street in Abertillery. The site was currently derelict pending development for the proposed Abertillery railway station. As the planned rail link to Abertillery had yet to receive UK Government funding, the site was likely to remain derelict for a number of years. The project envisaged cleaning up the site and creating a 'safe area' for the town's young people. The project would require significant on-going funding to provide shelters, lighting and other infrastructure. The proposed scheme had been endorsed by the Blaenau Gwent Youth Team.

The Council **RESOLVED** to agree in principle to support an initiative to create a safe area for young people on the former Lo-Cost site in Abertillery and authorised the Community Empowerment Committee to enter into relevant discussions on its behalf with the Abertillery Aspiration Group, Blaenau Gwent Youth Team, the landowner and others.

**36. INTERNAL AUDIT**

The Clerk shared the internal auditor's report on the Council's Annual Return and accounts 2022-23, which had been received only a few hours before the meeting. The Clerk said that the internal auditor had noted a number of deficiencies in the Council's financial oversight during 2022-23 of which the Council was fully aware. Action to address those issues had been taken at a meeting of the Finance Committee on 18 July 2023. There were a small number of other issues where the internal auditor required more information from the Responsible Financial Officer.

Most importantly, the internal auditor's report had highlighted two issues of which the Council had been unaware. Firstly, it was not clear whether the payment of members' allowances – which was made through the same Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council payroll as staff salaries – had been correctly removed from the figure for staff costs reported in the Council's Annual Return. Secondly, there was a discrepancy of £136.38 between two figures generated by the Council's online accounting system when they should be the same.

Although this was a small discrepancy, the Clerk stated that he could not ask the Council to approve the signing of the Annual Return until it had been rectified.

The Council **RESOLVED** that the Clerk could summon an extraordinary meeting of the Council in August to approve the signing of the Annual Return once the issues raised in the internal auditor's report had been resolved.

**37. BANK AUTHORISERS**

The Deputy Clerk reminded the Council that it had resolved to transfer the Council's current and reserve accounts from Nat West to Unity Trust Bank. Unity Trust was an online-only bank and the necessary authorisations would need to be given online in order to complete the transfer. One of the Council's current bank authorisers did not have access to email and had no working laptop. The Deputy Clerk proposed that the Member be removed as a bank authoriser and that a motion to review the list of authorisers be brought to a meeting of the Council once the transfer had been completed.

The Council **RESOLVED** to authorise officers to remove Glyn Smith from the list of the Council's bank authorisers.

**38. COMMITTEES**

The Council **RESOLVED** not to appoint Graham White as a Member of the Finance Committee.

**39. PARTY IN THE PARK**

The Chair said that a firm commitment to ongoing funding of Abertillery's Party in the Park would enable Members and officers to begin the event's organisation months earlier each year.

The Council **RESOLVED** that the Council will fund a Party in the Park event to be held annually on the second Saturday in June at Abertillery BG RFC.

**40. COUNCIL GRANT**

Steve Bard questioned whether it would be right for the Council to pay a grant to Llanhilleth RFC when the People and Communities Committee had paid a grant of £5,000 to Off The Streets in respect of the same event. Ben Owen-Jones believed that the proposed grant would bring benefits to the rugby club and to Llanhilleth that went beyond the staging of a single event.

The Council **RESOLVED** to authorise (under Section 145 of the Local Government Act 1972) officers to pay a Council Grant of £500 to Llanhilleth RFC.

**41. WARD GRANT**

The Council **RESOLVED** to authorise (under Section 19 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976) officers to pay a Ward Grant of £200 to Abertillery Bluebirds Youth FC.

**42. GRANT CRITERIA AND PROCESSES**

The Council **RESOLVED** to appoint the chairs of the Council's three budget-holding committees to a working group to consider the Council's criteria and processes for the awarding of grants.

**43. WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS REPORT 2022-23**

Ben Owen-Jones suggested that each citation of statistical information in the report should be accompanied by an appropriate reference. Steve Bard suggested that copies of the report should be filed in relevant places such as local libraries and that it should be circulated to appropriate public bodies.

The Council **RESOLVED** to approve the Council's Well-being of Future Generations Report 2022-23.

**44. NEXT MEETING**

27 September 2023

The meeting ended at 7.51 pm.

Draft



Steve Edwards  
Acting Clerk  
Abertillery & Llanhilleth Community Council  
Council Offices  
Mitre Street  
Abertillery  
Blaenau Gwent  
NP13 1AE

29th August 2023

Dear Steve,

Further to my Internal Audit of the Council in respect of the 2022-23 Annual Return, I am submitting my report and observations to the Council. As you will notice from the attached Internal Audit Report it was unfortunately necessary to issue a negative response in respect of Control Objective 3.

### **Control Objective 3**

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

### **Reason for the negative response Control Objective 3**

From the records available, there is no evidence that the Council has undertaken such a review during the year.

### **Implications in respect of the Annual Return**

As previously advised it will be necessary for a negative response to be entered on the Internal Audit Report. In addition, the Council will also have to return a negative response in respect of Assertion 5 of the Annual Governance Statement.

It is highly likely that this issue will be subject to further query by the External Auditor and it would be helpful in that regard if the Council were to properly Minute a discussion of a review of this issue and to include an explanatory letter when submitting the Annual Return.

In addition to the Negative Response on the Internal Audit Report we have also responded 'Not Covered' in respect of the Control Objectives 6 and 11 and we are required to explain why we have done this.

- We have responded 'Not Covered' in response to Objective 6 as we understand that the Council does not maintain a Petty Cash.
- We have responded 'Not Covered' in response to Objective 11 as we understand that the Council does not act as Sole Managing Trustee.



---

In addition to this letter and the statutory Internal Audit Report I have also submitted our Internal Audit Observations to you by email. I would be grateful if you could bring all of these to the Council's attention in due course.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'K. Rose', written in a cursive style.

Kevin Rose ACMA  
Director





# Community and Town Councils in Wales

## Annual Return for the Year Ended 31 March 2023

### Accounting statements 2022-23 for:

Name of body: Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council

	Year ending		Notes and guidance for compilers
	31 March 2022 (£)	31 March 2023 (£)	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	217,794	204,383	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	190,000	289,000	Total amount of income received/receivable in the year from local taxation (precept) or levy/contribution from principal bodies.
3. (+) Total other receipts	37,857	35,992	Total income or receipts recorded in the cashbook minus amounts included in line 2. Includes support, discretionary and revenue grants.
4. (-) Staff costs	67,913	60,223	Total expenditure or payments made to and on behalf of all employees. Include salaries and wages, taxable allowances, PAYE and NI (employees and employers), pension contributions and termination costs. Exclude reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses.
5. (-) Loan interest/capital repayments	0	0	Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on external borrowing (if any).
6. (-) Total other payments	173,356	179,195	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	204,383	289,958	Total balances and reserves at the end of the year. Must equal (1+2+3) – (4+5+6).
Statement of balances			
8. (+) Debtors	10,123	116,317	<b>Income and expenditure accounts only:</b> Enter the value of debts owed to the body at the year-end.
9. (+) Total cash and investments	242,012	190,507	<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	47,752	16,886	<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	204,383	289,958	<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	206,015	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	0	The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).



## Annual Governance Statement

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 2023, 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="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	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 type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	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="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	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="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	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="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	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="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	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="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	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="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	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 – The body acts as sole trustee for and is responsible for managing trust fund(s)/assets. We exclude transactions related to these trusts from the Accounting Statement. In our capacity as trustee, we have discharged our responsibility in relation to the accountability for the fund(s) including financial reporting and, if required, independent examination or audit.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	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.



## Additional disclosure notes\*

The following information is provided to assist the reader to understand the accounting statement and/or the Annual Governance Statement

### 1. Expenditure under S137 Local Government Act 1972 and S2 Local Government Act 2000

Section 137(1) of the 1972 Act permits the Council to spend on activities for which it has no other specific powers if the Council considers that the expenditure is in the interests of, and will bring direct benefit to, the area or any part of it, or all or some of its inhabitants, providing that the benefit is commensurate with the expenditure. Section 137(3) also permits the Council to incur expenditure for certain charitable and other purposes. The maximum expenditure that can be incurred under both section 137(1) and (3) for the financial year 2022-23 was £8.82 per elector.

In 2022-23, the Council made payments totalling £ 0 under section 137. These payments are included within 'Other payments' in the Accounting Statement.

2.

3.

\* Include here any additional disclosures the Council considers necessary to aid the reader's understanding of the accounting statements and/or the annual governance statement.

## Council/Board/Committee approval and certification

The Council/Committee is responsible for the preparation of the accounting statements and the annual governance statement in accordance with the requirements of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 (the Act) and the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014.

### Certification by the RFO

I certify that the accounting statements contained in this Annual Return present fairly the financial position of the Council/Board/Committee, and its income and expenditure, or properly present receipts and payments, as the case may be, for the year ended 31 March 2023.

RFO signature:

Name:

Date:

### Approval by the Council/Board/Committee

I confirm that these accounting statements and Annual Governance Statement were approved by the Council/Board/Committee under minute reference:

Minute ref:

Chair of meeting signature:

Name:

Date:



## Annual internal audit report to:

**Name of body:** Abertillery and 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 2023.

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.	Yes				
2. Financial regulations have been met, payments were supported by invoices, expenditure was approved and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	Yes				
3. The body assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.		No			See Negative Response Letter dated 29 <sup>th</sup> August 2023
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.	Yes				
5. Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked, and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	Yes				
6. Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.			N/A		It is understood the Council does not operate a petty cash
7. Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with minuted approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.	Yes				
8. Asset and investment registers were complete, accurate, and properly maintained.	Yes				





	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.	Yes				
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.	Yes				
11. Trust funds (including charitable trusts). The Council/Board/Committee has met its responsibilities as a trustee.			N/A		It is understood the Council does not act as Trustee

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. N/A					
13. N/A					
14. N/A					

\* 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 29/08/2023] \* Delete if no report prepared.

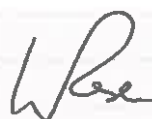
### Internal audit confirmation

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 2021-22 and 2022-23. I also confirm that there are no conflicts of interest surrounding my appointment.

Name of person who carried out the internal audit: Kevin Rose ACMA

Signature of person who carried out the internal audit:

Date: 29<sup>th</sup> August 2023





# Community and Town Councils in Wales

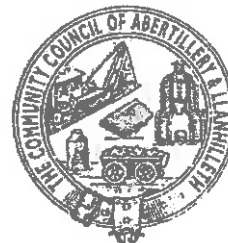
## Annual Return for the Year Ended 31 March 2023

### Accounting statements 2022-23 for:

Name of body: **Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council**

	Year ending		Notes and guidance for compilers
	31 March 2022 (£)	31 March 2023 (£)	
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	217,794	204,383	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	190,000	289,000	Total amount of income received/receivable in the year from local taxation (precept) or levy/contribution from principal bodies.
3. (+) Total other receipts	37,857	35,992	Total income or receipts recorded in the cashbook minus amounts included in line 2. Includes support, discretionary and revenue grants.
4. (-) Staff costs	67,913	60,766	Total expenditure or payments made to and on behalf of all employees. Include salaries and wages, taxable allowances, PAYE and NI (employees and employers), pension contributions and termination costs. Exclude reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses.
5. (-) Loan interest/capital repayments	0	0	Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on external borrowing (if any).
6. (-) Total other payments	173,356	178,652	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	204,383	289,958	Total balances and reserves at the end of the year. Must equal (1+2+3) – (4+5+6).
Statement of balances			
8. (+) Debtors	10,123	116,317	Income and expenditure accounts only: Enter the value of debts owed to the body at the year-end.
9. (+) Total cash and investments	242,012	190,507	All accounts: 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	47,752	16,886	Income and expenditure accounts only: Enter the value of monies owed by the body (except borrowing) at the year-end.
11. (=) Balances carried forward	204,383	289,958	Total balances should equal line 7 above: Enter the total of (8+9-10).
12. Total fixed assets and long-term assets	206,015	206,015	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	0	The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).





To: The Clerk  
 Abertillery & Llanhilleth Community Council  
 Council Offices  
 Mitre Street  
 Abertillery  
 NP13 1AE

Tel: 01495 217323  
 email: clerk.alcc@gmail.com

**APPLICATION FOR THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY COUNCILLOR  
 ON ABERTILLERY AND LLANHILLETH COMMUNITY COUNCIL**

Full name	Ralph Henderson MBE		
Home address incl. postcode			
Home telephone number			
Mobile number			
Email			

It is a condition of being a Community Councillor for Abertillery and Llanhilleth that your phone number and email address (an official email address will be supplied) be made public via notice boards and website.

**LEGAL QUALIFICATIONS FOR BEING A COMMUNITY COUNCILLOR  
 QUALIFICATIONS**

(To qualify you must be able to answer 'Yes' to both of the questions below)

Are you a British citizen, a Commonwealth citizen or a citizen of a European Union country?	Yes
Are you aged 18 or over?	Yes

(To qualify you must be able to answer 'Yes' to at least one of the questions below)

Are you on the electoral register for a ward within the Abertillery & Llanhilleth Community Council area?	Yes
Have you lived either in the Abertillery & Llanhilleth Community Council area, or within three miles of its boundary, for at least a year?	Yes
Have you been the owner or tenant of land in the Abertillery & Llanhilleth Community Council area for at least a year?	Yes (own home)
Have you had your only or main place of work in the Abertillery & Llanhilleth Community Council area for at least a year?	No (retired)





## **CO-OPTED COUNCILLOR PERSON SPECIFICATION**

### **Personal Attributes**

- Sound knowledge and understanding of local affairs and the local community.
- Forward-thinking
- Can bring a new skill, expertise or key local knowledge to the Council.

### **Experience, Skills, Knowledge and Ability**

- Ability to listen constructively
- A good team player
- Ability to pick up and run with a variety of projects
- Solid interest in local matters
- Ability and willingness to represent the Council and their community
- Good interpersonal skills and able to contribute opinions at meetings whilst willing to see others' views and accept majority decisions.
- Ability to communicate succinctly and clearly.
- Ability and willingness to work closely with other members and to maintain good working relationships with all members and staff.
- Ability and willingness to work with the Council's partners (e.g., voluntary groups, other Community Councils, principal authority, charities).
- Ability and willingness to undertake induction training and other relevant training.
- Experience of working or being a member in a local authority or other public body
- Experience of working with voluntary and or local community / interest groups
- Basic knowledge of legal issues relating to town and Community Councils or local authorities

### **Circumstances**

- Ability and willingness to attend meetings of the Council (or meetings of other local authorities and local bodies) at any time of day, and events in the evening and at weekends.





## DISQUALIFICATIONS

(You must be able to answer No to all of the questions below to be eligible to serve as a councillor)

Are you the subject of a bankruptcy restrictions order or interim order?	No
Have you within the last five years been convicted of an offence in the UK, the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man which resulted in a sentence of imprisonment (whether suspended or not) for a period of three months or more without the option of a fine?	No
Are you disqualified by order of a court from being a member of a local authority?	No

With reference to the Person Specification, please tell us something about the skills that you feel you will bring to the Council plus details of, for example, professional qualifications and financial or project management expertise.

Ralph Henderson MBE, MA, B.Ed (first class honours), CertEd (distinction), NPQH (CANTAB).

Most of my professional qualifications and expertise emanate from my career in education. Having graduated, I spent 41 years in secondary education without having a day off. I fulfilled most roles in a secondary school starting as a history teacher and retiring as a Headteacher. I believe that I am a good listener, and my management style could be described as 'action-centred team leadership'. I was responsible for high level budgeting including staffing and total school resources. I thrived in leading the school through important projects such as transformation from an under achieving, failing school to one which became an OFSTED outstanding school, personally winning an OFSTED outstanding teacher award.

I led the school into a competition with the BBC's Countryfile programme to win a prestigious award of 'Best School in Britain' for which I received the Queen Mother's Award for the Environment and a Jack Petchui Lifetime Achievement Award.

Please tell us something about the life experience that you will bring to the Council. Examples may include previous local government experience, work in the voluntary or charitable sector, business or trade union experience etc

My leadership skills were defined as Captain of my club and county rugby clubs. Since my retirement I have taken on numerous voluntary roles including working with famous sports people to inspire children around the country, as well as being Director of Rugby and Director of Player Development at rugby clubs.

My MBE was awarded for services to education and charity work, some of which were of an international nature.

I ran my own company called Appetito to inspire young people. I have previously been a volunteer youth worker and I am currently the Vice President in two rugby clubs. I still coach young people in rugby and tennis.

Currently I am one of the founder members of 'Abertillery Aspiration', dedicated to revitalising Abertillery.

Please outline why you are interested in being a community councillor.

Having being brought up in Abertillery, I was privileged to have opportunities which would secure a providential life. I am passionate about the community and would love to have the opportunity to invest time and expertise into the future development of the town and community.

Your signature: Ralph Henderson

Date: 17 August 2023

**Email your completed application form to [clerk@abertilleryandllanhilleth-wcc.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@abertilleryandllanhilleth-wcc.gov.uk)**

**Alternatively, you can post (or hand-deliver) the completed form to The Clerk, Abertillery & Llanhilleth Community Council, Council Offices, Mitre Street, Abertillery, NP13 1AE**

## Standards Committee Terms of Reference

The terms of reference of the Standards Committee are as follows:

1. Promoting and maintaining ethics and high standards of conduct by Councillors and Co-opted Members.
2. Assisting Councillors and Co-opted Members to observe the Members' Code of Conduct.
3. Advising the Authority on the adoption or revision of the Members Code of Conduct.
4. Monitoring the operation of the Members Code of Conduct.
5. Monitoring appropriate training for Councillors and Co-opted Members on Ethics & Standards.
6. Considering applications for dispensations to Councillors relating to interests set out in the Members' Code of Conduct.
7. Considering complaints which have arisen under the Council's internal procedure on member conduct and cases which have been referred by the Ombudsman.
8. Monitoring compliance by leaders of political groups on the Council with their duties under section 52A (1) of the 2000 Act (as amended) to take reasonable steps to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by the members of their groups, and to co-operate with Standards Committee in the exercise of these functions.

