

MINUTES OF DEVAUDEN COMMUNITY COUNCIL

held on Monday 28th November 2022 at Hood Memorial Hall, Devauden.

Councillors Present: J Williams (Chair)

A Williams

M Powell

L Hazell-Smart

P Kenington

J Lucas

In Attendance: I Cavill (Warden)

CSO Andrew Jones Gwent Police

PS Stephen Hayward Gwent Police

A Briley – (Clerk to the Council)

1. Apologies

Cllr A Kitson-Smith and R Buckler (County Councillor for Devauden).

2. Declarations of interest in items on the agenda

None.

3. Confirmation of minutes of meeting held 31st October 2022

Minutes of the previous meeting held on 31st October 2022 were approved by all then signed by the chair. To be posted on website.

4. 15 minutes public participation

No public participation.

5. Police Report - Andrew Jones Gwent Police

30/10/2022 – Report of a fire at property in Wesley Way. House was badly damaged, but no suspicious circumstances reported at the time.

5/11/2022 – Report of 4 young males with balaclava type masks on acting suspiciously around garages and vehicles on Wesley Way on the night of the village firework display. Officers attended and did an area search, but youths had run off. One youth was spoken to later who apologised for messing about in the area wearing masks. No entry gained and no crime/theft reported.

6/11/2022 – Report of a 1 vehicle non injury collision with a tree as you leave Devauden village towards St Arvans. The tree had come down on top of the car with no injury to occupants thankfully. The road was closed whilst the Highways cleared the road.

PS Stephen Hayward and CSO Andrew Jones from Gwent Police attended the meeting to give the above report and to address concerns about speeding in the area.

They brought to our attention a new department within Gwent Police (We Don't Buy Crime) tackling acquisitive crime throughout the Local Authority areas of Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport, and Torfaen, with the support of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. The police are aware crimes - those in which the offender receives a material gain - including burglary, robbery, and theft harm our communities. A person's home and possessions often carry an emotional attachment and when crime interferes with this, it can have a long-lasting impact on its victims. Gwent Police are committed to protecting people from these crimes. They are happy to arrange a presentation to community councils or other local groups to provide further information about the new scheme. Two local groups suggested were Devauden Teas and the Llanfihangel Project Group, clerk to send details of these groups to Andrew.

Action AB.

Andrew had contacted the 'Go Safe' team (Glen Walker) who said that now that the speed limit has been reduced to 20mph a new assessment for enforcement will need to be carried out. Andrew has also requested as a possibility to put speed measures (golden rivers) through the village that will give a more accurate reading of what speed vehicles are doing and the number of vehicles.

In summary, they confirmed they are listening to our concerns regarding speeding, they plan to have more police presence in the village and will be pushing to get the golden rivers in place to help build a true picture of what's happening in the area.

Stephen wanted to make the public aware in the lead up to Christmas, particular scams where scammers are phoning up about potential orders made online asking for bank details, must not give out personal information.

6. Matters Arising

- a) **Wye Valley Villages** – Cllr A Williams and Cllr J Lucas attended the first steering group meeting on 23rd of November for the Wye Valley project. The first order of business was to set up the operating procedure for the steering group, Cllr R Edwards was nominated Chair and Cllr A Williams Vice Chair. It was agreed to have 3 meetings in the first quarter to enable priorities and work plans to be set up working towards delivering the priorities listed in the plan, firstly being the new road signs. Discussions were had about breaking the group up into teams, so that everyone is not chasing everything and having an observatory function to go for spot funding. Also, talked about funding available for village halls around energy efficiency and social value but the process is you would need to have a consultant in place to make the case for you. The two points that they are the keenest on are active travel and energy self-sufficiency. Devauden got a mention because of the excellent cycle facilities. Itton are thinking about becoming a co-working hub so they have agreed some fundings to figure out what that would take, which would be a major benefit encouraging local business' networking and potentially less cars on the road. The new Wye Valley signs are currently being rolled out and are with Highways who plan to put them up where the existing village signs are if appropriate. The next steering group meeting to be held in January 2023.
- b) **Defibrillators** – It was suggested to speak to the British Heart Foundation and Aneurin Bevan Health Board to see what they say about the utility of defibrillators and get their opinions. If they say on balance, do more good than harm, then we get a plan together to install and look after them properly. It was proposed by Cllr A Williams to approach the above and seconded by Cllr J Lucas, all agreed. Cllr J Williams volunteered to approach the British Heart Foundation and Aneurin Bevan Health Board. **Action JW.**
- c) **Allotments car parking** – Cllr L Hazell-Smart to prepare a response to MCC regrettably informing them as we can't see any formal indication about being able to change its use for public community, we can't see how this would be anything but a liability so regrettably we would have to decline, unless there is some other form of way that you could indicate there would be greater public community. **Action LHS/AB.**
- d) **Dog Bins** – MCC have already confirmed that there was no contractor awarded the dog bin emptying contract but have also notified us that whoever empties the bins on NRW land must have a first aid and forestry training

certificate. Hence, the options are to either move bins that are on NRW land or to require that Merlin operatives are sent on the course to gain the qualification.

It was suggested by Cllr J Lucas to ask Natural Resources Wales to put up a sign on their barriers to 'stick and flick' in woodland areas. So, instead of using dog waste bags, the recommended method is to brush or sweep it into the undergrowth away from public footpaths.

The monthly cost DCC pay is £98.58 + VAT to empty the bins twice a month, looking at trying to reduce this as this cost keeps increasing. Merlin won't agree to doing it monthly, so DCC are looking at the locations of the bins to see if they are really needed. Litter bins which are emptied by MCC can be used for dog waste and people can also take it to their home bin.

DCC would like a public consultation on trying to reduce costs for the collection of dog waste. Therefore, it was proposed by Cllr A Williams to write the policy that we are proposing as an alternative. The current cost is £1,400 per year, this is DCC's third biggest cost. We need to agree proposed questions to put on Survey Monkey, upload to the website to engage the Devauden community and get their opinions. This was seconded by Cllr J Lucas and agreed by all. Cllr L Hazell-Smart volunteered to word the policy to propose and Cllr A Williams to create questions for the survey. **Action AW/LHS.**

- e) **SharePoint and new email addresses** – It was agreed to arrange a meeting point for December so that councillors could bring their device to receive help in setting up SharePoint. **Action AB.**

7. Clerks Report

My Mon outstanding reports

14865962 – dropped kerbs by the village hall – setting up an on-site visit. This has been referred again to the area engineer to set a date. Cllr J Williams is very concerned that this is taking so long to arrange a site visit. Clerk to Chase again. **Action AB.**

14498950 – overgrown hedges/trees by the Hood Memorial Hall – open – MCC comments were - The lane in question is a PROW (Footpath) initially the maintenance of the area would sit with our Countryside department who I will forward onto, but we must also take into consideration if the trees and Hedge rows interfering with the footway are located in private land if this is the case it would be the adjoining land owners responsibility to ensure their plant growth is

not interfering with the PROW. Mr Lucas from MCC has been to look at the trees and reported that there two dead ash on the track leading up to Chepstow Park Wood which he has passed onto MCC Rights of Way as this comes under their remit, he has recommended they should be removed. A large sycamore is hanging over the hall buildings, which could be crown reduced. All other trees either side of that track, mainly beech and oak look stable. Liability boundaries just need to be confirmed.

15175543 – Request to extend 40mph on B4293 travelling from Devauden past Kilgwrrwg turning – under review.

15465449 – Star Hill potholes and road surface – under review. Rachel Buckler to supply further updates at the December community council meeting – under review.

15455592 – Slow speed limiting sign to Kilgwrrwg – Mr Lucas from MCC reported that he has trimmed the hedge back in the immediate vicinity of the gradient sign on Kilgwrrwg Lane. The private hedge is already well maintained, it is difficult to see how the whole hedge could be cut back much further without impacting its structure. Ideally the sign should be raised higher on a new pole or moved a little way further down the lane – closed.

15614864 – Request that the slow speed limiting sign to Kilgwrrwg be raised higher on a new pole or moved further down the lane – under review.

Ash tree in Devauden allotments – quote from Oliver Field (Tree Surgery Contractor LTD) £1,485 + vat to section fell mature ash tree. DCC feel that the quote above is very expensive. The clerk to contact Western Power as they have on previous occasions trimmed the ash tree so that their cables are not obstructed. David Lucas from MCC, who has previously looked at the tree, is looking into the cost of felling the tree on a joint basis with other trees that need felling in the area as well. **Action AB.**

8. Finance

- a. Balances as of 25/11/2022: current account £2,903.72; deposit account £6,809.75.
- b. Banking – Online banking has been set up, all payments are made by BACs after approval of payments in the monthly meeting. We have had confirmation from HSBC that the extra signatories have been added to the account.
- c. Budget/precept review – Precept and budget discussions were started to plan for 2023/24. The clerk prepared the cashflow forecast and was distributed for discussion. This year's precept was £12,160, by 31st March 2023 there will be an overspend of approximately £1,800 because of rising costs through the year. It was suggested that it would be responsible to look at a figure for the

precept which is close to the average for the community councils across Monmouthshire and set the DCC precept in line with that.

It was proposed that Cllr J Williams and Cllr P Kenington would look at the average of the council taxes for similar sized councils per household for discussions at the next DCC meeting. It was agreed that DCC would have to raise the precept for next year in line with similar sized councils. **Action AB/JW/PK.**

- d. Noted that £545.16 was banked, received from Tintern CC from precept reserve resulting from boundary changes.
- e. It was agreed by all present to follow the national guidelines to incorporate the new clerk salary scales and to backdate the new rate to 1st April 2022. Clerk to inform Beverley & Williams. **Action AB.**
- f. Noted that community councils should seek to achieve publication of final audited accounts for financial year 2021-22 by 31st January 2023.
- g. Noted that the appropriate sum for the purposes of section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 for the community and Town Councils in Wales for the financial year 2023-24 is £9.93 per elector.
- h. BACs payments were approved for November 2022.

November 2022

Payee	Reason for expenditure	Amount	Vat	Total (£)	Payment method
Merlin	Emptying dog bins – October	98.58	19.72	118.30	BACs
Anita Briley	Clerk salary November	595.83	0.00	595.83	BACs
Anita Briley	Clerk expenses November	41.06	0.0	41.06	BACs
Andrew Williams	MS Business 365 licence – November 22	30.60	6.12	36.72	BACs

The Hood Hall	Bonfire insurance contribution	450.00		450.00	BACs
The Hood Hall	Christmas lunch contribution	150.00		150.00	BACs
			TOTAL	£1,391.91	

9. Correspondence

Cllr A Williams is interested in the OVW email talking about sustainability and nature.

Cllr J Williams is interested in the appointment of community councillor to the standards committee.

Circulated Correspondence:

- a) Tracy Gilmartin OVW. Information regarding defibrillators.
- b) Wendi Patience OVW. November and December training dates.
- c) Jan Whitham MCC. Council issues budget statement.
- d) Jan Whitham MCC. The council proposes sites for pioneering housing developments.
- e) Judith Langdon MCC. Chepstow cost of living summit.
- f) Kim Lloyd MCC. Enforcement monthly lists.
- g) Tracy Gilmartin MCC. New salary scales for clerks.
- h) Tudor Thomas MCC. Remembrance Day.
- i) Lindsay Gauntlett MCC. Monmouthshire roadworks.
- j) PSE top stories. Speed limit change can benefit the Welsh economy.
- k) Tracy Gilmartin OVW. Innovative practice conference.
- l) Tracy Gilmartin OVW. Welsh government workshop events.

- m) Jan Whitham MCC. Xmas wishes Monmouthshire's vulnerable children.
- n) Tracy Gilmartin OVW. The importance of Community & Town councils in building resilient spaces for nature.
- o) Trudy Humber MCC. Temporary road closures.
- p) Tracy Gilmartin OVW. Bullying and harassment in councils.
- q) Tracy Gilmartin OVW. Finance and governance toolkit.
- r) Jan Whitham MCC. Cost of living support drop-in sessions.
- s) Martin Bull Welsh Government. Publication date for audited accounts 2021-22.
- t) Martin Bull Welsh Government. Section 137 expenditure limit for 2022-23.
- u) Lindsay Gauntlett MCC. Monmouthshire roadworks week ending 25/11/2022.
- v) Sadie Beer MCC. Wye Valley Villages agenda for meeting 23rd November 2022
- w) Wendi Patience OVW. SE Wales team meeting bulletin.
- x) Susan Parkinson MCC. Proposed new dog bin contract.
- y) Tracy Gilmartin OVW. The future of Welsh communities.
- z) Joanne Chase MCC. Appointment of community councillor to the standards committee.
- aa) Tracy Gilmartin OVW. Nature hub.
- bb) Sadie Beer MCC. Wye Valley project meeting notes.

10. Planning

No planning applications.

11. One Voice Wales

Nothing to report.

12. County Councillor Report

County Councillor R Buckler was unable to attend the meeting but sent over the following report:

Update on Star Hill 28th November 2022

Further to a meeting between Councillor Rachel Buckler and Hwyl Price of Monmouthshire Council this is the situation as it stands.

Star Hill is not currently on the list for resurfacing. It is not considered bad enough repair to be considered in the near or medium (or even long term) future.

The system used to determine this is a points-based system, starting with a Gavit Survey, which uses AI and a structured points evaluation of the road surface, and also takes into account My Mons residents' complaints, accidents logged with the police and surveys undertaken.

There are extremely limited funds for road repairs and resurfacing and this underfunding will continue to be a major problem.

There is another way to approach this. If there are validated serious safety concerns there is another funding source, and with this in mind Cllr Buckler has put in motion that there should be a Safety Audit carried out as soon as possible.

This will be arranged with the relevant Council officers and myself as soon as a date can be mutually arranged.

Cllr Buckler put on record that it is a dangerous stretch of road, and that the gradient has to be taken into account as it is pertinent to safety concerns, especially with the large numbers of cyclists using this road, which as we know, mixed in with farm vehicles and cars can make this stretch of road extremely hazardous.

To raise the profile of this, and to show that there is strong local impetus to address the dangerous condition of Star Hill, Cllr Buckler proposes to start a ward petition (which can be done via electronic communication, door to door canvassing etc.).

Liaising with the Devauden Community Council and Llantrisant Fawr Community Council, we can make sure the local community are informed of the petition.

13. Ward Reports

Cllr L Hazell-Smart – Reported that he had spoken to Richard May from The Hood Hall Committee about advertising on the outside of the bus stops. Richard is taking it back to the hall committee to discuss the commercialization opportunity for DCC.

Cllr P Kenington – Reported he has been asked for an update on the caravan and barns at The Cot, but explained we had no update and that it was currently with MCC planning.

Tim Walker, the chair of The Hood Hall has proposed that the hall and DCC hold a joint meeting on matters of mutual interest. Cllr P Kenington has suggested that he comes to the 'public participation' part at one of our meetings to discuss further.

The Hood Hall have put in a request for a contribution to the fireworks insurance and pensioners Xmas lunch. The pensioners lunch will be advertised more widely to attract people from Itton and surrounding villages, due to take place on Sunday 18th December 2022. Cllr L Hazell-Smart expressed concerns that the fireworks were not just for the community, they benefit a much broader catchment area with people who are not charged, more of a commercial event, hence why should DCC be funding that. Questioning whether it's a Devauden community event. It was suggested that this topic could be discussed with Tim Walker when he attends our next meeting.

Cllr J Williams proposed that the bonfire contribution is paid this year, but we have a discussion and re consider for next year, Cllr J Lucas seconded the proposal. Cllr M Powell counter proposed that the contribution is not made but there was no one to second this. All agreed apart from Cllr M Powell.

Cllr J Williams proposed that the pensioners lunch contribution is paid this year, it was seconded by Cllr L Hazell-Smart, all agreed apart from Cllr M Powell who objected.

Cllr A Williams – Reported that he needs to write back to Ann Octon to update her on the proposal of 20mph through Itton Common. **Action AW/AB.**

The road that runs through the valley to Cobblers Plain, the bottom third of that is thick with gravel, being a real obstacle for cyclists and cars too. Location using what3words is (nylon, sandbags, fixated) and (suits, depending, swift). Clerk to report to MCC. **Action AB.**

Cllr J Williams – Reported complaints about the playground in Wesley Way, in particular the swings there's a lot of rust with paint peeling off, with some of the seats split as well. Clerk to report to MCC. **Action AB.**

There is also a large pothole at the top of Cole Lane, the turning area beside the pub which MCC need to address. So much has washed down Cole Lane it needs to be swept as it is dangerous. **Action AB.**

Cllr J Lucas – Reported gravel on Llanfihangel Tor – y - Mynydd Road near the church, request MCC to clear road. (palaces, landlords, dustbin) **Action AB.**

I.Cavill – Reported a large pothole in Itton near Dyers House. (oath, special, protector) **Action AB.**

14. Items for the agenda and date for the next meeting.

Discussion on the website.

Budget and precept discussion.

The date for the next meeting is Monday 19th December 2022 at 19:15.