CYNGOR CYMUNED

GOETRE FAWR

COMMUNITY COUNCIL

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD BY TELECONFERENCE ON MONDAY 19th APRIL 2021**

## **Present:**  Community Councillors Owen Dodd, Andy Barnes, Jan Butler,  Colin Deakins, Janet Robins, Nicola Awni, Nigel Morrey,  Peter Daniel, Rose Thayers and Syd Welford

**Apologies:** None received

**Absent without apology:** Community CouncillorsRoger Howells and Lucyann Rands

**In attendance:**  Jonathan Lazenby (Clerk)

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|  |  | **ACTION** |
| 1 | **Apologies for Absence**As above.  |  |
| 2 | **Declarations of Interest**The Vice Chair opened the meeting by asking members present whether they had any declarations of interest to make. The Chair and Councillor Deakins had previously advised the Clerk that they were both personally impacted by the reorganisation of primary care services, necessitated by the closure of the Monmouth House surgery in Usk. Councillor Welford said that he too was affected. Councillor Robins re-stated a potential interest in the item on Cemetery maintenance payments as her husband is an elder and Treasurer of Capel Ed Church (although the Clerk reminded the meeting that Capel Ed have not claimed this ‘allowance’ for the past couple of years). The Vice Chair reiterated that those present should notify the meeting of any additional interests which became apparent during the progress of the meeting.  | Clerk |
| 3 | **Chairman’s Remarks**The Chair joined the teleconference and welcomed everyone to the meeting.  |  |
| 4 | **Approval of the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 22nd March 2021** 1. Item 11. It is believed Penwern Laneshould read Penywern Lane. The minutes of the meeting were then proposed as a true and correct record by Councillor Welford and seconded by Councillor Barnes.
 | Clerk  |
| 5 | **Matters Arising**1. Item 7 (ii) – Defibrillators. The Clerk has now checked and registered all the defibrillators with the British Heart Foundation. A replacement battery has been fitted to the Little Mill unit (at a cost of £176 plus £9.95 P&P plus VAT). Retrospective approval was proposed by Councillor Butler and seconded by Councillor Deakins. Replacement pads (FOC from the NHS) have been fitted to the Star Inn defibrillator, and a further set is held for the Goytre Village Hall unit which expire in June.
2. Item 7 (iv) – Village Hall / Newtown Road manhole. MCC Highways have confirmed that the manhole and gullies were cleaned on 26/3/21.
3. Item 7 (v) – The remaining leaf debris in Goytre Car Park has been reported to MCC – it was inaccessible to the leaf cleaning machine due to parked cars. The leaves will be removed manually if required.
4. Item 8 (iv) – The emptying of the bins on a weekly basis from April has been confirmed with Merlin Waste. Goytre Wharf have thanked us for our support.
5. Item 14 – Network Rail have advised that due to the volume of vegetation management needed across Wales, it is not feasible to only undertake the works outside of the nesting season. In addition, NR have to ‘book’ possession of the line many months in advance. However, they have reassured us that mitigation strategies are in place to minimise any disruption to wildlife.
6. Item 18 (i) – Communications – Domain renewal. The Clerk has renewed the contract with M247. A full discussion of our email services will take place today under item 17 – ‘Communications’.
7. Item 18 (ii) - The closure of Monmouth House surgery in Usk and the consequential changes made to the primary health care services. Note: Declared interest from Councillors Dodd, Deakins & Welford – (see item 2). The Health Council have provided a comprehensive response to our query regarding the new arrangements (following the failure of anyone wishing to take over the old practice). Some concerns were expressed whether this may lead to longer waits for appointments. However, it was agreed that the new arrangements should be allowed to bed in, following which any issues should be raised by patients directly with the practice. The Clerk noted that a new (additional) consulting room is being constructed in Usk Surgery (James House). Councillor Deakins advised he had attended a Health Council meeting and they assured him that they were keeping a close eye on the situation, but appeared confident that the new arrangements would work.
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| 6 | **Maintenance** (inc. items reported but not addressed)1. The Clerk advised the meeting that Councillor Thayers is purchasing two benches for the new wildflower garden in Goytre park in memory of her late husband Graham, and daughter Kelly. Councillor Thayers asked if anyone knew where she could obtain a plaque to place on each bench. Councillor Deakins suggested Timpson’s in Cwmbran and Councillor Barnes said that he would send through an address of a web supplier.
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| 7 | **Finance**1. Payments made since the March 22nd meeting Payments included in the **2019/2020** financial year

 **£**Payments included in the **2020/2021** financial year

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1. Review and acceptance of 2021 cashflow and end of year accounts

The Clerk presented the meeting with the following documents.* The March 2021 (end of year) cashflow
* Accounts for 2021 (inc 2020 for comparison purposes)
* Bank reconciliation

The Clerk confirmed that the Cashflow balances had been verified to the closing balances in the UTB statements at the end of Jan/Feb/Mar 2021, with Councillor Barnes signing to confirm in accordance with section 2.2 of the Community Council Financial Regulations (Wales).There was no further comment or observation. Acceptance of the documents as an accurate record of the transactions and closing financial position of the Community Council was proposed by Councillor Morrey and seconded by Councillor Daniel. Clerk to send relevant docs to EH Accountancy.1. Audit Committee ReportThe Audit committee presented their annual report to Councillors. There was some confusion as to whether the document had been sent out, with the Clerk not realising it was anticipated that he would distribute it. The Clerk therefore read the report to the meeting, and it was agreed he would forward it to Councillors so it could be formally considered and voted upon at the May meeting. .
2. External Audit – Key datesThe external audit papers have now been received. Due to almost 200 Councils still not having completed their 2019/20 audits, Wales Audit have decided to delay the introduction of the new three-yearly, full transactional audits, by one year. The key dates of the audit are:
* 30th June – latest date for Council approval of the annual return
* 6th August – 19th August minimum period for publication of the audit notice on web site and noticeboards
* 20th August to 17th September – period for all accounts, books, vouchers, receipts etc to be made available for public inspection.
* 1st September – final date for receipt of annual return by Audit Wales.
* 20th September – date from which electors can exercise their rights under the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004.
* 27th September - No audit opinions issued before this date.

Clerk / RFO confirmed that the dates were in line with previous years and none should pose any difficulty.1. Finance Committee update inc Risk Review
	1. Although the 2021/22 budget was agreed by Council at its March meeting, the Clerk noted that it would be prudent to make the following accruals for items which MCC failed to debit in time to be included in the 2020/21 year-end accounts:
* Parks & Recreation: £175 + £35 VAT (Little Mill grass/hedge cutting)
* Capital Items £2390 + £478 VAT (Wildflower planting in Goytre Park).

This was agreed and formally proposed by Councillor Awni and seconded by Councillor Butler.* 1. The Clerk has previously circulated the full risk assessment to all Councillors. Key highlights included:
		1. Reserves - considered adequate at £32,422 (92.6% of current [£35k] precept).
		2. Salaries & wages – updated wage details forwarded to Beverley & Williams. Standing orders now updated.
		3. VAT Recovery – Clerk will be submitting a claim for £1454.14 for 2020/21 financial year. This is c£500 less than anticipated due to the non-payment of the VAT amounts due to MCC listed above.
		4. Staff safety – Clerk has sent email to employees to check adequacy of training / equipment / protective clothing. Both confirmed as OK.
		5. Health & Safety - 2021 Safety Inspection by MCC of Little Mill children’s playground, together with suitability of play equipment. All play equipment was considered low risk, although just scraped an ‘adequate’ rating from a play assessment perspective. It would benefit from the inclusion of a basket swing (for which there is space). Surfaces need cleaning (will cost £180 + VAT). The cleaning was agreed and proposed by Councillor Daniel and seconded by Councillor Robins. Three loose bolts on the fence need to be tightened. However, Councillor Deakins has been unable to identify these – Clerk to contact MCC. The suggested removal of the Ash tree to be considered and referred to the Village Hall Committee by Councillor Deakins.
		6. GDPR - JISC UK (Domain guardians) have had a security breach and have advised the ICO. To date the Clerk has received one suspicious email which he has forwarded to JISC for information.
		7. Web page accessibility - Large Print options of documents now available. Information has been posted on how to enlarge documents on screen. Guidance on using Microsoft ‘Speak’ function also provided.
		8. Community & Town Councils Duty under Section 6 of the Environment Wales Act 2016 (Bio diversity plan) - The pollinating trees and orchard have now been planted in Goytre Park and the flower beds are awaiting seeding. Councillor Robins felt that with the current dry spell the newly planted trees may need to be watered. Clerk to Contact Nigel Leaworthy. Clerk to arrange for the planter by the Chip Shop to be filled. He has already sent an email to Nantyderry nurseries and will chase again.
		9. Health & Safety – Three-yearly electrical testing at Olde Pounde Shop scheduled for Tuesday 4th May.
		10. All the village defibrillators are now up and running and logged on the BHF database (‘The Circuit’).
		11. Clerk is checking whether the handwasher dryers in the public conveniences can now be switched back on. Councillor Butler advised that she had seen similar Wallgate units back in use in Aberystwyth, Ludlow and at motorway services. Clerk to chase MCC for a response.

The Chair asked if in future the Risk assessment could be numbered for ease of reference – The Clerk agreed he would arrange for this.Acceptance of the Risk assessment was formally proposed by Councillor Deakins and seconded by Councillor Daniel. | ClerkClerkClerkClerkClerkClerkCllr. DeakinsClerkClerkClerkClerk |
| 8 | **Planning Committee**The committee met on the 30th March to consider the following1. Amended design to extant planning permission on Twyn Cecil, Llan Lane.
2. The erection of a conservatory at a property on Park Y Brain Lane.
3. An outdoor riding arena on Folly Lane, Mamhilad.
4. A two-storey rear extension to a property on 33 Longhouse Barn.

Acceptance of the minutes of the planning meeting held on 30th March 2021 was proposed by Councillor Dodd and seconded by Councillor Deakins.There were no updates. There are currently no scheduled planning meetings.Path Order at Springfield Cottage – it was noted that the stile has not yet been replaced with a gate, as promised. Clerk to refer to MCC. | Clerk |
| 9 | **Allotments**Since the previous meeting the Clerk has been in contact with the BBNPA who have confirmed that planning application would be required to use Ton Land for allotments, with the main concern being the number of ‘greenhouses’ (or similar constructions) that would be required. Welsh Govt advice also states that toilets would be required – they can be compostable (to avoid the need for mains drainage), but would need a handbasin for handwashing. Therefore, a cleaning and emptying rota would need to be drawn up, and a sink included into any design. Councillor Awni suggested we should identify these costs at an early stage. In terms of rental, a typical rate would be £12 per perch (25 square metres) per annum, and hence the land has the potential for a total annual rental income of c£2000. Councillor Robins said that the land identified on Longhouse Barn contained a spring, which may be the reason it has never been built on, as it would make it unsuitable. Councillor Deakins wondered whether, post pandemic, the demand for allotment plots would be as great. However, Councillor Robins advised that there is always a demand, and a waiting list for the small plots at the Community garden. Councillor Welford suggested consideration should also be given to allow people to maintain ‘livestock’, especially chickens. It was agreed that the Clerk should continue to investigate.  | All / Clerk |
| 10 | **Formation of Committee(s) to oversee transfers in/out due to forthcoming boundary changes**The Clerk advised that to date the boundary changes legislation has not been passed into law by WG. Given the current purdah restrictions (due to the imminent elections), it seems unlikely that the legislation will pass until at least June. Shan Bowen at OVW is chasing on a regular basis, but as yet they do not know the terms that will apply regarding the transfer of assets, leases and reserves etc, so it is unclear what requirements will be made of Community Councils. MCC also appear to have no implementation plan and are relying on OVW to provide all necessary advice and guidance. The Chair suggested that we set up a working / advisory group to liaise with Llanbadoc CC and Llanover CC to identify what assets / reserves / leases etc will be transferred in / out and to consider the budget implications for 2022/23. It was suggested the group be formed of the Chair and the Clerk, with Councillors Daniel, Deakins and Butler volunteering to be part of the working group. This group was formally proposed by Councillor Butler and seconded by Councillor Deakins and carried unanimously. The Clerk advised that he has already emailed Llanover and the Clerk there has advised that GFCC will need to take on responsibility for the running of St Bartholomew’s graveyard at a cost of £1400 per annum. Budgeted income from burials was £800 last year, although there was none. They have no dog bins. The Chair queried whether the CC owned the village hall. The Clerk advised that he did not know, but will make further investigations.  | Clerk |
| 11 | **Equality & Diversity Training**OVW are able to provide a bespoke event for us at a cost of £299. This works out at £25 per attendee (vs £30). We therefore need a minimum of 10 attendees to make it cost effective. Rather than Councillors try amongst themselves to agree a specific date, it was requested that the Clerk contact OVW to ask for a selection of dates that would be forwarded to Councillors to consider.  | Clerk |
| 12 | **Plans for** **updating/replacing/adding play equipment on the park**.The Chair asked Councillors to consider the need to update some of the play equipment in the park and whether we need to start the budgeting process in advance (bearing in mind the mini roundabout in Goytre Park cost £6,000 inc. the new surface). The recent assessment of the equipment in Little Mill concluded it was only just ‘adequate’. Councillor Robins emphasised that the Little Mill report scored the equipment ‘zero’ for sensory and natural play and we need to ensure any new equipment addresses these areas too. As a result, she was not convinced a basket swing would be the best piece of new equipment to purchase, although Councillor Butler said it would have the advantage of being accessible to everyone. The Chair concluded by asking Councillors to give this further thought – and whether we should utilise existing reserves, or begin the budgetary process to purchase over time.  | All |
| 13 | **Litter and Fly-tipping prevention plan for Wales**This item was carried forward from the previous meeting. Councillor Robins had sent out a very comprehensive document which ran to 35 pages, with 16 questions covering 5 different themes and all requiring a very detailed response. Councillor Awni felt that the document needed to be more succinct or people were unlikely to respond. Whilst admirable, the aims were probably beyond what Community Councils could do. Councillor Butler extolled the usefulness of using ‘Fix My Street’ to report fly tipping. After discussion, it was agreed individual Councillors could respond if they had any views. A response to the consultation is required by 22nd April.  | All |
| 14 | **Cemetery Maintenance Payments**Declared interest from Councillor Robins – see item 2. At the beginning Councillor Robins advised that, for information, Capel Ed Church was to approach the Church authorities to formally close the graveyard. Following this, Councillor Robins took no further part in the discussion.Since the last meeting, the Clerk has forwarded a number articles on the subject, all of which appear to reinforce the doubt as to the legality of the payments, but without clearly outlawing them. One article argued that as Church Councils have a statutory duty to maintain graveyards, this should not be passed to the local taxpayer. Although CC’s do have a right to manage a closed graveyard, the Chair noted there had been no formal application to close one since 1974. The Clerk felt that if challenged, any ‘financial sanctions’ would be limited. However, if such payments were identified under the forthcoming transactional audit, it might result in the withholding of the general power of competence. Councillor Deakins felt the Community Council should be supporting the Church in Wales as every resident had a right to be buried in one of their graveyards. However, Councillor Awni felt the Community Council should not act against the official advice which questioned the legality of any such payments. After further debate Councillor Awni proposed that no further payments should be made and this was seconded by Councillor Barnes. The result of the vote was 4 Councillors in favour of the proposal, three against, and two abstentions (Councillor Robins did not vote). The proposal was therefore carried. Consideration to be given as to how to reallocate the budget at the next meeting. | ClerkAll |
| 15 | **Reports – questions based on previously distributed update.*** **Little Mill Village Hall**
	+ No report submitted
* **Goytre Village Hall**
	+ No report submitted
* **Goytre School Governors**
	+ No report submitted.
* **Goytre Community Centre**
1. GASC has returned, but numbers have halved (averaging 11) as many parents continue to work from home. However, the new maximum number of pupils allowed due to COVID is only 20. Things may improve after Easter as more go back to school.
2. Income affected accordingly but application for loss of income grant has been submitted to Garfield Weston Foundation.
3. Future of GCC. A site meeting took place with Cllr. Phil Murphy, cabinet member for resources, plus two others. They have asked for ideas as to how the space could be utilised if the buildings were removed / site cleared.
4. Extreme weather caused a small leak between Main Hall and house. This will be monitored.
5. Awaiting guidance from WG as to further opening, but have agreed sole use for GASC until after Half- term (7th June).
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| 16 | **Donations**Clerk has received a request for funding from Lisa Winnett – a Councillor with Blaenau Gwent for a new charity - Retired Police Dogs of Gwent. It has been set up to promote the wellbeing of retired Police dogs, by providing financial assistance to their owners, as it is extremely hard to obtain pet insurance for an ex-serving dog. The aim is to give financial assistance for veterinary care via a grant application from the new owner. After careful consideration, Councillors did not believe that in general, such a donation would benefit local residents of the Ward. It was therefore agreed to ‘note’ the request without any further action.  |  |
| 17 | **Communications.**The Clerk believes that he has now identified the cause of historic meeting invites and agendas being delivered to some Councillors. He has also investigated alternative arrangements with an SLCC supported company who provide CC web sites and email hosting. Their service is web mail based, and so would require each Councillor to set up a notification system on their device if they wish to be advised each time an email was delivered. They would then need to log on to see the message. The cost is £18 (plus VAT) for each account (so currently £18 x 13). Our current service appears to be included in the web hosting fee (or at least there is no separate charge). Any change is likely to cause an element of upheaval, and the Clerk recommended that we take no further action for the time being whilst we monitor whether the issue has now finally been resolved. This was agreed. |  |
| 18 | **Advertising** - Usk and Raglan Diary contributions July / August 2021.Councillor Welford advised the closing deadline would be after the next meeting. | All |
| 19 | **Date of next meeting & close –** Monday 17th May 2021. Annual Statutory Meeting at 19.30, followed by Full Council meeting at 20.00. | All |

Chairman: **…………………………………….……………** Date:**…………………….**