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GOETRE FAWR

COMMUNITY COUNCIL

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT LLANOVER VILLAGE HALL & BY TELECONFERENCE ON MONDAY 24th APRIL 2023 @ 19.45**

**Present**: Community Councillors, Owen Dodd, Andy Barnes, Morgan Chandler,
Nigel Morrey and Janet Robins.

**Guests** Mrs Pat Smith

**In Attendance**: Jonathan Lazenby (Clerk).

**Apologies**: Community Councillor Peter Daniel, and Community & County Councillor Jan Butler

**Absent without Apology:** Community Councillor Scott
 Grayland

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|  |  | **ACTION** |
| 1 | **Apologies for Absence.**As above.  | Clerk |
| 2 | **Declarations of Interest.**The Chair commenced by asking the members present whether they had any declarations of ‘interest’ to make, which includes previous declarations already made. The Chair reminded members that they should notify the meeting of any additional interests which became apparent during the progress of the meeting. Councillor Barnes re-declared an interest in the MUGA as, depending on its siting, (if on the lower section of the park), he was likely to object on the grounds of noise. No further declarations from the members were forthcoming. | All / Clerk |
| 3 | **Chairman’s Remarks.**Councillor Dodd took the opportunity to welcome everyone to the meeting.  |  |
| 4 | **Minutes**1. Approval of the Minutes of the meeting held on 20th March 2023The minutes were proposed as a true and correct record by Councillor Morrey, seconded by Councillor Chandler, and carried by all those eligible to vote (Councillor Robins did not vote as she was not in attendance on 20th March).
 | Clerk |
| 5 | **Matters Arising.**1. Item 6 (ii) – The Clerk has written to MCC regarding the state of the road surface on the railway bridge, and asking for a long-term solution to be arranged between MCC and Network Rail (i.e. a full re-surface). He has also queried the reports that the resurfacing equipment is too heavy for the bridge. This has not been an issue previously, and there is no weight restriction on the bridge. The email has been acknowledged, but to date, there has been no formal response.
2. Item 7(viii) – Re-letting of Ton Land. The new lease has now been signed, and the first six months’ rent has been received.
 | Clerk / Cllr. Butler |
| 6 | **Guest**At this point, the Chair invited Mrs Pat Smith, a resident of Mamhilad to address the meeting. 1. Mrs Smith wanted to know if there were any planning issues/restrictions with regard to the insertion of farm gates, to provide access to and from fields. The Clerk believed that this was the case and would contact MCC and BB/BBNPA to see if they had any guidelines.
2. Mrs Smith also wondered if we could promote the use of the local footpaths. The Clerk to investigate providing a link to the MCC map of paths on our web site, publishing it on the noticeboard and possibly via Facebook. He will also contact Keith Renshaw of Gwent Ramblers to see what other actions might be available.

The Clerk to contact Mrs Smith with the outcome of his investigations. | Clerk |
| 7 | **Maintenance** (including items previously reported but not yet addressed).1. Vandalism of the Gent’s toilet door of the Public Conveniences As reported to Councillors on 4th April, someone has tried to prise off the aluminium kick plate from the base of the gents’ toilet door, with either a crowbar / claw hammer), pulling it away from the door.  The plate is damaged beyond repair and its ‘removal’ has exposed the base of the door, which is largely rotten. In addition, the Clerk is arranging for a lock to be put on the door to the attic to prevent unauthorised access (as per item 6 (iii) in last month’s minutes). Ian Williams Ltd, our main building contractors, have yet to quote for the work. However, given the need to repair or replace the door as soon as practicable to prevent further deterioration (assuming the door is salvageable), it was proposed that the Clerk be authorised to agree up to £500 for the door repair. Authorisation was proposed under Finance Regulation 11.1(a)(iii), which states that tenders are not required for work to be executed, which consist of repairs to existing equipment.

This was proposed by Councillor Dodd, seconded by Councillor Morrey, and carried unanimously. | Clerk |
| 8 | **Finance**1. Payments made since the previous meeting.Payments included in the **2022/2023** financial year  **£**

Payments included in the **2023/2024** financial year  **£**  |  |
|  | 1. VAT ClaimThe Clerk submitted a claim of £2260.89 for 2022/23, and this was received into the accounts on 18th April.
2. Review & acceptance of 2022/23 cashflow and end of year accounts

The end of year Cashflow, Bank Reconciliation and Accounts Statement had previously been circulated to members. 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 2023, during the Finance Committee meeting on 18th April, with Councillor Daniel 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 all three 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 Chandler. All Councillors voted in favour. Clerk to send relevant docs to EH Accountancy.1. 2021/2022 Audit ReportThe Clerk was delighted to report that we have received an unqualified audit report from Wales Audit, with no issues or comments being raised. This is particularly pleasing, as the accounts have been subjected to additional scrutiny, as part of the first of the three-yearly transactional analysis regime. The members thanked the Clerk for his work and diligence on this important area. Although there were no issues or comments in the report, it was agreed that formal acceptance of its conclusions should be put to the meeting. This was formally proposed by Councillor Dodd, seconded by Councillor Morrey and carried unanimously.
2. External Audit 2022/2023The papers from Wales Audit have now arrived for the 2022/23 return. The Clerk has already started to prepare the documents for both the internal and external audits. However, given the issues that Wales Audit have with resourcing, and the ongoing backlog of older audits still being cleared, they have decided not to issue the key notice dates for time being. These will be issued once they have confirmed the date from which their audit team will be in place. In the meantime, we are asked to prepare and approve the annual returns as soon as we are able, and so the Clerk will follow the usual timescales with sign-off no later than 30th June.
3. Budget 2023/2024

Clerk / RFO advised that our year end reserves had increased to £19710, up from c£15k, at the end of the last financial year. Council originally set a balanced budget, although the CC regularly underspends this. In particular, the following key budget variations were noted:* Councillor allowances / honoraria / care costs – c£3k underspent
* Election Costs £600 underspent (as no election)
* Graveyards - £1375 additional non-budgeted income (burials / headstones).

Based on the above, the Clerk felt the existing budget was appropriate and that no changes were required at the moment for the forthcoming year.1. Finance Committee update inc Risk Review & Health & SafetyThe following key issues were recorded from the Finance Committee’s risk review, undertaken at their meeting on 28th April.
	1. Precept
		1. Not Paid by MCC - MCC have confirmed to us that this year’s payments will be received on 28th April, 31st August and 29th December.
	2. Reserves – General Adequacy
		1. End of year reserves as of March 2023 were £19,710, (48% of this year’s £41k precept) – up from 41% as at 31/03/22. Clerk/RFO considers this to represent an adequate short-term reserve.
	3. Legal Powers – Illegal Payment or Activity
		1. The General Power of Competence was passed at the May 2022 ASM, and will require renewal at May’s 2023 ASM. The unqualified audit means that we still meet all three eligibility criteria. Our Standing Orders and Financial Regulations will also require review and re-adoption at the same meeting. OVW have confirmed that an updated template for T & CC Standing Orders will be made available shortly to take into account the changes brought about by the Local Govt. and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.
	4. Salaries / Wages
		1. Wrong Salary Paid - Increase of wage rate to £10.50 per hour formally agreed at Full Council March 2023. Updated wage details have been forwarded to Beverley & Williams for payment from April 2023 onwards. Standing orders for the wages have also been updated to reflect 2023/24 salaries.
		2. Wrong Rates Applied - Clerk’s salary increase for 2022/23 agreed at January 2023 Full Council and backdated to April 2022. B&W (payroll providers) advised.
	5. Recovery of VAT payment
		1. Claim for 2022/2023 (£2260.89), has been submitted to HMRC and received into our accounts.
	6. Councillors Allowances – proper deduction of Tax
		1. We are still awaiting confirmation from OVW as to whether the IRPW approved ‘basic’ and ‘consumables’ allowances for Councillors can now be paid without deduction of tax. The IRPW suggestion is that these payments can be taken under the umbrella of the tax-free £26 monthly allowance available for working from home. However, it is possible that some members may already have utilised this in their normal employment which is beyond the knowledge of the Clerk. Formal advice is still awaited from OVW.
	7. Training of Clerk / Staff
		1. Email sent to both cleaners on 02/02/23 asking for confirmation of adequate safety supplies / materials safety guidance/training issues. Confirmation rec’d 08/02/23.
	8. Assets
		1. Loss / Damage - Insurance renewed 2nd February 2023. As suggested by Internal Auditor, all cover reviewed due to high inflation with renewal levels assessed against Asset Register. In particular, building insurances confirmed at March meeting following re-instatement revaluations from Linnell’s (Property Consultants) in February 2023, at £125k (OPS) and £90k (Public Conveniences).
		2. Asset Register - Clerk obtained property re-instatement valuations during Feb 2023. Building valuations confirmed to Zurich in line with surveyor recommendations.
	9. Consultations
		1. Meeting of deadlines for response. The planning committee’s quorate numbers reduced from 4 to 3 at full Council February 2023.
	10. Health & Safety
		1. The St Bartholomew’s Graveyard headstone risk assessment has now been completed, with headstones either secured or laid over where this was not possible.
	11. Register of Interests
		1. Interests received and recorded with exception of Councillor Grayland who has not filed a return.

Acceptance of the Risk Assessment and Health and Safety updates was then formally proposed by Councillor Morrey, seconded by Councillor Robins and carried unanimously.  | ClerkClerk |
| 9 | **Planning.**1. Any other updates / future meetingsThere have been no meetings since last full Council and there are currently no updates or future meetings in the diary.
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| 10 | **County Council update – County Councillor Jan Butler.**The following update had previously been circulated to Councillors by Councillor Butler.1. The A4042 crossing petition came to committee and has been referred back to Lee Waters, MS.
2. The campaign has got through the 2nd phase on the crossing bid, i.e. it has met the threshold, and local surveys of the area have been completed. The Go Safe campaigners watched them measure up. Are now waiting to hear whether they get funding, and if so when. Nothing has come out from Mr Water’s office, which we’re told is unusual. Announcements usually come out as we move into the new financial year.
3. The Go Safe campaigners are using the speed gun, but have been dodging some pretty bad weather through March. All drivers exceeding the speed limit are logged onto the Police website by the organiser. Speeders are followed up with a letter. Multiple offenders and excessive speed results in a visit from an officer. It is very effective in slowing people down. We’re told our group of 24 is one of the largest that has ever come forward. It’s a good reflection of the strength of local feeling.
4. Councillor Butler has been doing some work with businesses at Goytre Wharf and the Bafflehouse cafe to improve road signage. Graham Kinsella (Traffic and Road Safety Manager MCC) has visited the Ward and we have a clear idea of where signs need to be. Brown signs for the wharf will need to be agreed with Glandwyr (Canal and River Trust). The Bafflehouse will need to approach Lee Waters to get ‘slow down’ signs etc for The Cedars. Actions are taking place. The A4042 is a Trunk Road and WG are responsible
5. Cllr Butler’s group brought forward a motion at last Thursday’s County Council meeting. They are very concerned about rural transport and the withdrawal of emergency funding, post covid, for the bus services. Funding is being withdrawn on 24th July and it’s not known whether the X3 bus will run, and if it does, how frequent the service is likely to be. This will be a bitter blow for all our residents, especially with the situation regarding the bus stops/crossing. Cllr. Butler spoke for the residents of Goytre Fawr at the meeting, and also mentioned the frustration of having a mainline railway, but no longer a stop. All council meetings can be viewed online on Youtube should people wish to follow the debate.
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|  | 1. Separately to the above, the issue of the resignation of the partners from the Churchwood GP Practice in Pontypool (with potential knock on to Goytre surgery) was raised. This does not mean that Churchwood surgery will close, but it requires a new GP Partnership to take it over. There will therefore follow a six-month process to try and establish new partners which will involve members of the AB Health Board, ‘Llais’, (the replacement for the Community Health Council), and the Local Medical Committee.  The Clerk to contact Llais to understand the process in more detail and ascertain what engagement in the process is available to the CC.
 | Clerk |
| 11 | **Community Engagement – Councillor Janet Robins.** The discussion was led by Councillor Robins who is keen to improve our engagement with the local community. Suggestions included a survey (on-line, perhaps via Facebook, or hard copy), together with informal coffee mornings for face to face feedback. Options for the survey were discussed, including a pre-suggested list of potential priorities, to leaving the form completely open. Options for its distribution/collection were also discussed. However, the resourcing required for it to be individually delivered to each property was recognised. It was thought that listing the key priorities for the previous 12 months might be useful, but recognising that a number of the likely key issues, (e.g. A4042 crossing) were outside of the scope of the CC to deliver directly. It was agreed that Councillor Robins, with support from the Clerk, would put together an outline form for further consideration at May’s meeting.  | Cllr RobinsClerk |
| 12 | **Goytre Recreation Park**1. Sports recreation hub inc MUGA updateDisappointingly, despite a chaser from the Clerk, there has still been no progress on the SUDs report. Councillor Dodd asked that the Clerk write again with a deadline, so that he can escalate the lack of progress, if we have still had no response by the set date.
2. Playground equipment update

The Clerk is to contact Johnathan Wassal (JW), at MCC, to see if there are any available funds, following the end of the last financial year. Councillor Robins advised that the equipment in Usk was funded by a lottery grant which MCC applied for in partnership with the Parents group. Total raised was £120k (£40k for the equipment/£40k for the surface/£40k for installation). The Usk Park ownership appears to be back with MCC, and so it was not clear how a resident’s group would have qualified for funding. The Clerk to enquire of JW to see if he was involved in the process. However, the process took some 4 years from application to installation, so it is unlikely to deliver quick results.  | ClerkClerk |
| 13 | **St Bartholomew’s Graveyard – update**As reported earlier, the Graveyard headstone Risk Assessment has now been completed, with headstones either secured or laid over where this was not possible. The Clerk has written to the Revd. Kevin Hasler to advise of the actions taken, in case any relatives of the graves affected would like to arrange for the stones to be re-set. The next scheduled check will be due in 2026 and this has been diarised on the health and safety checklist.There has been no further progress regarding the extension of the graveyard. Clerk will follow up next month if there are no further developments. Another burial is scheduled for this week and so available burial space will shortly be exhausted. Maintenance of the graveyard has been confirmed for 2023/24 at the same price as last year. | Clerk |
| 14 | **GDPR - Review and update as necessary, of GDPR document retention policy.** Councillor Dodd has now had an opportunity to review the GDPR documentation. He has identified that the document makes no specific reference to the timescales required for the retention of electronic documents. It is possible that the content of any such document is the driver for the retention timescales, but this does not appear to be categorically stated anywhere. The Clerk suggested Councillor Dodd contact the IOC for some definitive guidance and it was therefore agreed to carry the item forward for a further month to see if further clarification can be obtained. Councillor Dodd confirmed that he thought the Privacy document was fine.  | Cllr. Dodd |
| 15 | **Village Committees’ Reports – questions based on previously distributed updates*** **Goytre Village Hall**
	+ Free food stall going well
	+ Bowls every Tuesday and Thursday. Ballroom dancing Monday nights followed by Judo. Wednesday Bingo. Walkers and book club all going well.
	+ AGM next month.
	+ Usual issues with regard to energy increase.
	+ Plenty of bookings for the events in the hall for May, June and July.
* **Llanover Village Hall**
	+ No report submitted.
* **Goytre School Governors**
	+ Last Governors’ meeting held Wednesday 19th April, which included further discussions regarding the Asymmetric introduction which looks positive. A letter on the outcome of the consultation will be sent to all parents this Friday, 28th April.
* **Goytre Community Centre**
	+ Grant funding. Approaches have been made to Lottery People and Places fund for a medium size grant up to £100K. Councillor Butler will be having a Teams meeting to discuss further on 5th May.
	+ Local builder has measured up in the Jack’s building to provide some idea of costs for its renovation. This will be Phase 1 of the plan to offer a home to GASC, and others whilst further phases take place. The following phases will need separate funding.
	+ Phase 2 will be upgrading the main building to a modern accessible standard.
	+ Phase 3 will be to infill between the two buildings with a proper working kitchen/ cafe seating area.
	+ Councillors Dodd and Butler have met with a WiFi contractor. However, they have quoted c£20k for a full installation of video/audio equipment. The company has provided some links to potential funding sources, although these appear to be several years out of date. Councillor Morrey felt the quote was excessive for the requirements of the centre, with, as an alternative, substantial TVs available in electrical retailers for c£1000.
	+ MCC have assigned an officer (Ashley Morgan) to work through the asset transfer process, and we are arranging a meeting with him.
	+ Fundraising event is going ahead - Eurovision Party Night Saturday 13th May in Llanover Village Hall. Tickets £7 include sandwich buffet. From Councillor Butler, or Lewis on the Llanover Events Committee.
* **Other Reports**
* Newport Area Committee. As reported earlier, the Clerk reported that it is still unclear whether this year’s Councillors’ allowances can be paid tax free. OVW are still investigating.
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| 16 | **Donation requests.**1. Monmouthshire Citizens advice Due to an oversight, the Clerk forgot to include a donation request from Monmouthshire Citizens Advice on last July’s agenda. The CC has traditionally supported the organisation, and indeed, during the current cost of living crisis, they have made a number of presentations in the village. Councillor Morrey proposed that the CC make a total donation of £300, being £150 for 2022/23, and a further £150 for 2023/24, as a request was likely to be forthcoming shortly for the current year. This was seconded by Councillor Chandler and passed unanimously.
 | Clerk |
| 17 | **Communications.**1. There have been no communications
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| 18 | **Advertising** - **Usk and Raglan Diary contributions July / August 2023.** The closing date for submissions for the July / Aug 2023 edition will be towards the end of May. At this stage there are no suggested articles for inclusion. |  |
| 19 | **Date of next meeting and close.**The next meeting is to be held on **Monday 22nd May.** This will commence with the Annual Statutory meeting at **19.45,** followed by the ‘ordinary’ May meeting at approximately **20.15**.The venue to be Llanover Village Hall, and by teleconference via: <https://meet.jit.si/GoetreFawrCommunityCouncil> | All/Clerk |

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