**C Y N G O R T R E F C A E R F F I L I**

**C A E R F F I L I T O W N C O U N C I L**

**CLERC Y TREF: MAER Y TREF:**

**TOWN CLERK: TOWN MAYOR:**

**P G Davy Cllr M Prew**

**MINUTES OF THE ORDINARY MEETING OF THE CAERPHILLY TOWN COUNCIL HELD BY MULTI LOCATION ON 18TH NOVEMBER 2024**

**Present:**

Councillors P J Bevan, M Downes, J Fussell, J Grenfell, S Kent, C Lewis, A Broughton Pettit, J Pettit, M Prew,

**Apologies:**

Councillors P Reed, C Elsbury, D Roberts

**In Attendance:**

R Taylor, T Hughes, Gwent Police

P G Davy, Town Clerk

**58 MINUTES OF THE ORDINARY TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 18TH SEPTEMBER 2024**

**59 MINUTES OF THE ORDINARY TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 21ST OCTOBER 2024**

**60** **MATTERS ARISING**

 Minute 45 – A further letter had been sent to the PCC in respect of off road bikes but no response had been received.

 Minute 48 – No response had been received on the Virginia Park development and it was agreed to raise the matter again with CCBC.

 Minute 52 and 57 it was noted that Councillor J Grenfell had agreed to fix the plaques.

**Address: The "Twyn Community Centre The Twyn Caerphilly CF83 IJL**

**Telephone: Caerphilly 07950 935822**

 **E-mail: caerphillytowncouncil@outlook.com**

 **Office hours: By Appointment Monday to Friday**

**61 COMMUNITY SAFETY MATTERS**

A written report had been received from Gwent Police which recorded 136 reported incidents covering ASB, shoplifting, homelessness and the bus stop area opposite Iceland. Regular patrols have been instigated for Caerphilly on Ice and an operation to target shoplifters in the run up to Christmas. The effectiveness of the Storenet radio system was the subject of review. There had been a number of crime prevention initiatives including distribution of information to St Martins Comprehensive relating to knife crime.

Members raised the following:

* CCTV camera at junction of Market Street / Van Road by Library
* Electric and off road bikes causing problems at various locations
* Extent of drug use

**62 TOWN MAYOR’S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Mayor outlined his recent engagements:

* Pink Charity event at Asda
* Opening of the new playground at Cwrt Rawlin Primary School
* Bowling Club presentation evening
* Attendance at Remembrance Sunday service
* Christmas Lights switch on
* Visit to Winter Wonderland

The Mayor recorded his thanks to everyone involved in the organisation of the Christmas Lights switch on event including the Twyn Community Centre caretaker Matte Lloyd.

**63 ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS**

Attention was drawn to the disruption caused by the gasworks on Pontygwindy Road, and the access to the Park and Ride due to housing development at Van Road

**64 TOWN CLERK’S REPORTS**

1 Q2 Budget Monitoring 2024/25 Financial Year

Expenditure in the period 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024 was £38013.77 which represents 27% of the budget approved in November 2023. The report was noted.

2 External Audit Report

The external audit of the Annual Return for the year ending 31 March 2024 has been completed by Audit Wales. The Auditor General for Wales has issued an unqualified audit opinion. There were no matters drawn to the council’s attention.

The Notice of Conclusion of Audit and Right to Inspect has been published on the website and noticeboard together with a copy of the Certified Annual Return and Audit Opinion.

It was resolved to approve and accept the Certified Annual Return.

3 Flag Flying Calendar

The list of flag flying days was agreed as set out in the report with the addition of Armed Forces Day on 28 June and it was resolved to vire £1000 from savings in the 2024/25 budget to “Miscellaneous” to enable new flags to be purchased where required.

4 Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales – Draft Annual Report 2025 to 2026

The IRPW had published draft proposals for 2025/26. The proposed Member payments (mandatory and optional) for community and town councils were noted. There are no significant changes with the payments remaining at the same level as in 2024.

It was noted that the IRPW functions will transfer to the Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru on 1 April 2025 as a consequence of the Elections and Elected Bodies (Wales) Act 2024.

5 Events Working Group

The Christmas Lights Switch On had taken place on 15 November 2024. Issues that had been discussed in preparation for the event were noted. There will be a debrief early in 2025 when the future of the event will be considered.

A discussion had taken place at the Working Group on a range of options relating to the planning and management of the fireworks display. Fundamentally all the options require an increase in resources which have an implication for the precept. The budget estimates had to be approved at this meeting, and it was necessary to reach a decision whether to increase the precept, without at this stage taking a decision on any option.

It was resolved that as there is no certainty the fireworks display will be able to proceed in 2025 to defer any decision on resource capacity to a future date which will avoid having to increase the precept for 2025/26. In consequence of this decision by default there will be no fireworks display in 2025 notwithstanding the position with Cadw.

6 Budget Estimates 2025/26

The Town Clerk outlined the assumptions on which the budget estimates were based outlining the continuing economic pressures on households. A budget expenditure of £140015 is proposed for 2025/26 which is an increase of £25650 on the revised projected expenditure for the current financial year.

Income is projected at £109700 resulting in a contribution from balances of £30315 to achieve a balanced budget. The balances have built up in the last 5 years due to cancelled events and generally lower expenditure so there is a good argument to part utilise the balances to absorb inflationary pressures. Balances can only be used once so this is not normally the appropriate strategy for meeting recurring revenue expenditure.

Members were advised that the level of expenditure proposed for 2025/26 cannot be sustained in future years without an increase in the precept, or alternatively reducing expenditure through savings, or a combination of both.

The changes to employer’s National Insurance from April 2025 announced in the Budget on 30 October 2024 will have implications for the Town Council. The estimates do not include for the additional cost which is likely to be around £1000.

In view of the decisions taking on Agenda Item 8.5 (minute 64.5 18.11.24) there are no changes to the budget estimates that were attached to the report (other than the additional cost of National Insurance).

It was resolved:

1 To approve the budget estimates for 2025/26 set out in the tables attached to the report.

2 To set a precept of £15.50 for Band D propertied for 2025/26.

3 To update the budget following completion of the year end accounts in April 2025.

4 To approve a donation of £2000 to the Mayor’s charity, Alzheimer’s Wales, for the financial year 2024/25 in accordance with the established practice in the absence of a street collection (due to no fireworks display).

7 Charter for Community and Town Councils

The Town and Community Council Liaison Committee had raised concern at the way the local council sector is treated by the principal council and the ineffectiveness of the charter provisions. It had been proposed to add the following clauses to the charter:

“Ensure that town and community councillors are recognised and afforded respect as holders of public office when dealing with CCBC staff via either contact centre or in dealing with officers in representation of the local electorate.”

“Ensure that consideration is given to the schedule of monthly town and community council meetings when planning community initiatives to ensure adequate notice is provided to the relevant councils for their input and involvement (for example, community cleansing activities and town centre stakeholder meetings etc)”

It was agreed to support the proposed amendments to the charter.

8 Local Government Pay Agreement 2024/25

The National Joint Council for Local Government (NJC) has reached agreement on rates of pay applicable from 1 April 2024 involving a payment of £1290 or 2.5% whichever is the higheron each scale point. If the new pay scales are adopted by the Town Council the annual increase in salary costs will be £906-48 (based on pro rata hours of the Administrative Assistant and the Town Clerk). Provision had been made in the budget for a pay increase of 3% which equates to £679-50. The pay agreement will therefore require an additional £226-98 virement to salaries to meet the full costs in 2024/25.

It was resolved:

To implement the local government pay agreement effective from 1 April 2024 as agreed by the NJC (back pay to be paid in December 2024) and including the virement of the necessary additional monies to the salaries budget.

The Town Clerk declared an interest and offered no advice on the matter.

**65 PLANNING MATTERS**

A list of all planning applications received since the last Town Council meeting in September 2024 (list not reviewed at October meeting) was included on the agenda as confirmation of consultation by the Local Planning Authority. The applications are circulated as soon as received from CCBC on an individual basis and it is for Members to identify any matters they wish to raise before the expiry of the 21 day consultation period. No comments have been on any of the applications listed.

Councillor J Fussell declared an interest.

**66 PAYMENTS AND FINANCIAL MATTERS**

1 List of payments were noted and approved.

2 Bank account balances were noted.

**67 CORRESPONDENCE**

There were no items of correspondence.

**68 MEMBER REQUESTS FOR FUTURE REPORTS**

There were no requests.

**69 NOTICE OF MOTION**

The Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor J Fussell.

The proposer, Councillor P J Bevan, spoke to the motion and made the addition of the following wording:

“-------to restore the Winter Fuel Payment forthwith to all pensioners or low paid workers who are in receipt of any form of funding credits.”

The Town Clerk advised that the council does not have any powers to engage in political campaigns to change government policy, and any such action would be ultra vires. In view of this advice the action proposed in the motion was not supported but it was agreed to minute concern about the impact on pensioners of the change to the winter fuel allowance as set out in the first part of the motion.

“This Council notes with dismay the decision by the UK Government to end automatic winter fuel payments to all pensioners. The decision will cause millions of pensioners across the UK severe hardship and will contribute to the untimely death of thousands. This Council is particularly concerned for the welfare of senior citizens in our community and across Wales in the winter months ahead.”

The meeting closed at 7.50 pm