

Minutes of a meeting of the Manafon Community Council held on Wednesday the 4th March 2015 at 7.30pm. at New Mills Village Hall.

Present – Cllrs. R. Benyon, Chairman, J. S. Davies, C. Davies, T. Jerman, H. Lewis, C. Cllr. and the Clerk Mrs L. Stanton.

- 1) **Welcome** by Cllr. R. Benyon Chairman
- 2) **Apologies for absence** – Apologies from C. Cllr. Mrs. J. Shearer, Cllrs. Mrs. E. A. Lewis, Ms. J. Hall.
- 3) **Declaration of Interest** – Clerk Lorraine Stanton vis a vis agenda item 12; Review of probationary period of Clerk.
- 4) **Minutes of the last meeting**; minutes approved, proposed by Cllr. C. Davies, seconded by Cllr. H. Lewis, duly signed by Chairman Cllr. R. Benyon.
- 5) **Matters arising from minutes.**
 - a) Clerk confirmed all action points completed from action points.
 - b) Correspondence – Clerk to filter more before distributing; retain all incoming emails; forward those requiring specific actions to Chair / Vice Chair; in future once the web site has been revamped more documents of interest to Council and Community will be published on the web site. Clerk will ensure web site documents uploaded are adequately maintained.
 - c) Clerk to thank residents for improving exit from the Green onto the B4390.
 - d) Community delivery/Devolved services project; Powys CC seem unable to quantify /decide in what statutory / non-statutory services that are provided which will make devolving some services extremely difficult.
 - e) Clerk advised not experienced enough to suggest any changes / updates, more time required to assess after attending OVW financial course for Clerk to complete the review / update of standing orders, financial regulations and risk assessment after, this to be done in time for discussion at AGM in May.
 - f) Investment strategy, options for increased interest explored by Clerk, no other suitable bank accounts available that secure better interest payments, most need a minimum monthly payment in of £500 +/- and 2 direct debits, not something we can comply with. Council agreed to leave with HSBC.
- 6) **Correspondence / Updates from Clerk**
 - a) Clerk reported that a considerable levels of emails were shared with Council recently, probably too many. Magnitude of incoming correspondence is considerable, takes some time to assess for salient information and decide what should be forwarded and what requires action and by whom. As per minutes arising, in future Clerk will take a more stringent approach on dissemination of correspondence and forward those requiring action to Chair/Vice Chair. Clerk raised question in respect of consultation documents with deadlines and if there was a laid down procedure to deal with, again those requiring action to Chair/Vice Chair.
 - b) Clerk reminded Council that 95% of all correspondence and action to be taken was electronically driven now and access to the internet was becoming increasingly critical. Clerk gave a review of the correspondence received since last meeting, salient points on major items are as follows:-

- i) Membership confirmed and members pack received from PAVO, useful if we need to avail of services in future.
- ii) Council charges likely to rise under budget pressure, the LGIU reports that over half of principle councils won't have enough funding to cover their legal duties this financial year.
- iii) Vattenfall will commence with regular newsletters and local surgeries to keep communities up to date on developments related to Mynydd Lluest y Graig wind farm. Next public meeting Thursday, 19 March 2015, 5pm – 7pm Llanfair Caereinion Public Institute, Llanfair Caereinion Powys, SY21 0RY.
- iv) OVW has launched new web site Councillors have been given access information open to Councillors as well as Clerks.
- v) The long awaited White Paper on the reform of local government in Wales entitled '**Reforming Local Government: Power to Local People**' has been published by the Welsh Government and is open for consultation until the end of April. Whilst much relates to Principal Authorities and Area Boards, there is a very important section on Community Councils. The Government have also published some interesting headline facts relating to the sector. A meeting is scheduled Thursday 19th March @ Pencoed should any Councillors wish to attend, more details available from Clerk. Consultation white paper closes end of April. The white paper has raised the proposal that Community Councils should have to pass a set of competency tests in democracy, capability capacity and governance. Significantly for Clerks and the Society, one of the tests might include a capability test which proposes that the Community Council must employ a clerk with relevant professional qualifications. Relevant qualifications might include Certificate in Local Council Administration; Certificate of Higher Education in Local Policy; Certificate of Higher Education in Local Council Administration; the first level of the foundation degree in Community Engagement and Governance awarded by the University of Gloucestershire; or qualifying professional status such as a lawyer or accountant. The Society will be studying the full document in detail over the coming weeks, discussing with One Voice Wales, and preparing the Society response to the White Paper. All members in Wales are encouraged to ensure their Councils respond directly to the consultation. A public awareness campaign will be running alongside the consultation.
- vi) Clerk informed Council of various training courses available through to July being run by OVW, more details available from Clerk.
- vii) Clerk gave a précis of the current consultations and closing dates, the most relevant to Manafon being the draft National Transport Plan closing 11th March. A joint local transport plan has been submitted by Ceredigion, Powys & Gwynedd to the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport Powys.
- viii) Archives funding applied for to Heritage Lottery Fund for new accommodation at Llandrindod Wells to house the Powys archive collections, this will enable local groups to expand and preserve the ongoing story of how we live in Powys.
- ix) Wales to remember First World War – some key events taking place around Wales.
- x) The 3rd annual joint conference will take place at the Hotel Metropole Llanrindod Wells 14th May 2015, headline – Community Governance - The Future, keynote address from Leighton Andrews AM Minister for Public Services, any Councillors wishing to attend should secure details from Clerk.
- xi) OVW conference scheduled for Saturday 3rd October at RWS Builth Wells, agenda to follow, anyone wishing to attend should secure details from Clerk.

- xii) Welsh Government Consultation Document - Tax Devolution in Wales - Landfill Disposals Tax. The Minister is keen to engage with members of the public on this consultation and has specifically asked that Town and Community Councils are informed of the consultation and invited to respond and disseminate further should they wish. The consultation, including details of how to respond, can be found on <http://gov.wales/consultations/finance/landfill-disposals-tax/?lang=en>
- xiii) Kidney Association for Wales are running a 'Walk for Life' Clerk will put details on Village Hall notice board.

7) Archiving.

Not main agenda item, see reference under correspondence.

8) Planning

No applications received, no approvals received.

9) Highways

No specifics raised except a general comment about the overall poor condition of roads with even increasing numbers of pot holes. Reporting deemed to be futile during winter so agreed that people would submit a list for next meeting and Cllr. C. Davies would control and liaise with highways department.

10) Web site development

Clerk confirmed grant from Powys received. Clerk met with Glenn Roberts to discuss revamp of web site, most of the Grant will support web site hosting over next few years. Revamp is obligatory due to changes in legislation affecting Community Councils giving communities proper access to information and the ruling is that everything has to be published electronically; these changes are effective May 2015. Sections 55 to 58 are primarily concerned with access, we have to have a web site that enables us to interact more with the community, ability to upload documents, information sharing, financial accounts, and member's interests, political affiliations of members, committees belonged, and any office held within the Council. Clerk has looked at other web sites to see the sort of compliance / information required, plan is for Clerk to put text together and submit at next meeting for Council approval, this will need to be expedited due to time constraints involved. Once revamp has taken place Clerk will accept responsibility for maintaining in future.

11) Reports of Training / Meetings attended

Clerk attended OVW financial course for RFO's. Proved very useful especially in covering standard procedures, timings, audits etc. that govern all council Clerks/RFO's, also useful to meet with other Clerks.

Clerk informed Council of the future SLCC meeting 19th March at Llanrindod Wells, Clerk unable to attend this meeting due to prior engagement that can't be changed.

12) Payment of accounts / Budget forecast / Expenditure YTD

List of accounts that required payment.

Village Hall Hire	£120.00
One Voice Wales membership	£41.00
Stationery	£53.92
Clerk expenses R Davies	£20.80
Clerk L Stanton travel expenses	£12.80
Donations to charities / events	£250.00
Clerk expenses L Stanton	£25.00
Clerk L Stanton training/conference	£35.00
CLlr travel expenses - R Benyon	£12.80
CLlr travel expenses - J Davies	£16.00

Clerk advised that at this stage do not expect any further payments in this financial year, postage should last a few more weeks.

Budget forecast:- Future financial years we need to be establishing budgets during October / November before precept set in January.

Expenditure YTD: - Clerk provided a summary of the accounts for this financial year to Council. Accounts up to date, the budget item for web site hosting will move into next financial year as paid bi-annually every June. Clerk will prepare audit documents end of April for submission. Subject to Council's agreement will have a different book keeper for internal audit as unable to get in touch with previous auditor and understand no longer handling audits.

Issue with bank statements from HSBC resolved now being received by Clerk.

13) Retirement Gift/Discretionary payments.

It had been brought to the attention of the Chairman that recent changes to Local Government regulations meant that the sum of money previously agreed by council and subsequently awarded to retiring clerk in recognition for her 36 year service was an ineligible payment. The Chairman had sought the advice of OVW and this had been confirmed by OVW that under the change of legislation the Council had not now followed the correct and limited way to fund this type of award. Once this matter had come to light the money was refunded in full. This left the councillors present discussing the response from OVW that the award could possibly be funded by a collection from current and previous Councillors. It was decided to make this an Agenda item for next Council meeting when all Councillors would be present to consider this and other options.

At this point the Clerk left the meeting.

14) Review of probationary period of Clerk

Council discussed the position of Clerk now probationary period has come to an end and details will be finalised at next meeting in May.

- 15) **Date of next meeting** – The next meeting of the Council will be held on Wednesday the 7th of May 2015 at 7.30pm. The meeting will consist of the AGM followed by the meeting for normal council business.

Proposed agenda for AGM meeting 7th May 1930 hours

1. Welcome
2. Apologies for absence
3. Declaration of interest (as agenda points arise)
4. Minutes of the last meeting
5. Matters arising from minutes
6. Election of Officials and Representatives
7. Correspondence
8. Web site development update
9. Planning Applications
10. Retirement Gift/Discretionary payments
11. Council Audit
 - a) Accounts Audit
 - b) Annual Governance Statement for year ended 31st March 2015
 - c) Review of standing orders
 - d) Review of financial risk assessment
 - e) Review of financial strategy
12. Highways matters
13. Reports from meetings / training attended
14. Payment of accounts
15. Agenda items next meeting
16. Date of next meeting
17. Position of Clerk/RFO

As there were was no other business to discuss the Chairman thanked everyone for attending and the meeting closed at 2145 hours approx.

Lorraine Stanton

Clerk to the Council

Action Points from Meeting 4th March 2015

1. Clerk to complete the review / update of standing orders, financial regulations and risk assessment
2. Clerk to continue with web site development for presentation at next meeting
3. Clerk to arrange for internal audit
4. Clerk will prepare audit documents for year-end audit
5. Clerk to thank residents at The Green for hedge cutting to improve visibility on exit to main road
6. All Councillors to provide a list for Cllr. Davies at next meeting of any highways issues to be coordinated by Cllr. Davies

Appendices

App. 1. Extract from summary White Paper

4.3 Community Councils

There are 735 Community Councils in Wales. Community Councils work at the town or village level and some serve a very small area. We believe this is too many and the smaller ones simply don't have the resources to get much done. One strength of Community Councils is that they're closer to local people, however, they aren't always open and don't always involve the public they serve. In principle they are democratic bodies and for this reason they can raise local taxes, but in reality there is no competition for the vast majority of seats in Community Council elections.

4.4 Local Authorities review of Community Councils

There's a lot of good work that Community Councils do. However, we think there is a clear case for making changes. We want Community Councils to be more ambitious and work in partnership with other community groups. We want them to be open about the decisions they are making and involve the people in their area. We need them to see themselves as part of public services in Wales, and be more actively involved in work that support families, children and young people and other vulnerable groups like older people.

They can only do this, if there are fewer, larger Community Councils. Some of the smaller Community Councils should look at joining together to form larger Community Councils that look after wider areas. In order to achieve this, we want to give Local Authorities the power to review the Community Councils in their area and with a view to reducing the overall number, and for them to complete this work by 2022.

4.5 Governance and standards

As well as changes to Community Council areas, the public needs to know there are standards for how Community Councils manage their business and how public money is spent and accounted for. We want to have a set of tests that Community Councils have to pass to be seen as capable and competent.

Councils that pass these tests will have extra rights and responsibilities. They will have wider powers to do things for the benefit of their community. Those that don't pass the tests should look to do so by joining with another smaller Community Council to form fewer, larger Community Councils.

4.6 Community Councillors serving on more than one Council

Almost half the Councillors on the main Councils are also Community Councillors. This could cause conflicts of interest when main Councils are conducting reviews of Community Councils. Also, some people serve on more than one Community Council as well as being a Councillor of the main Council.

We want your views about whether we should prevent the same person serving on a main Council and a Community Council, and on more than one Community Council.

We want:

Councillors to be actively involved in their communities and Area Boards;

Councillors to have an open door, listening to people's needs;

Councils to work together with other services, voluntary organisations and communities; and

Councils to look at the Community Councils in their area and consider changes.

Headline facts

There are 8,069 Community Councillors. 68% are men; 80% are aged over 50, 60% over 60. 99.5% are white.

72% of Community Councils serve populations of less than 2,500, but they range from 179 (Ganllwyd) to 45,145 (Barry).

there is just one Community Council in Merthyr Tydfil, 77 in Pembrokeshire, and 111 in Powys.

735 Community Councils cover approximately 96% of Wales' land surface, including 70% of its population. There are few Community Councils in Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Newport, Neath Port Talbot, Rhondda Cynon Taf and Swansea.

Community Councils spend over £40 million a year, of which £30 million is raised through a precept on the Local Authority Council Tax. On average, Community Council precepts rose by 88% between 2002-03 and 2012-13. The highest precept is £959,930.

at the last election, only one in five Community Councillors was elected through public poll. 67% of seats were uncontested and there were no candidates in a further 12% of seats.

on average, 45% of County Councillors are also Community Councillors. This ranges from none in Merthyr Tydfil to 87% in Wrexham and 99% in Flintshire.

Today the Minister for Public Services published *Reforming Local Government: Power to Local People*. This White Paper sets out the Welsh Government's vision for the future of Local Government which is more inclusive, accountable and shares power and responsibility with the communities it serves. The proposals in the White Paper are fundamental reforms to ensure robust democracy, good governance, strong performance and effective delivery for communities.

The White Paper and the online consultation survey can be accessed via the Welsh Government website <http://wales.gov.uk/consultations/localgovernment/power-to-local-people/?lang=en>

The closing date for responses is 28 April 2015.

If you have any initial queries please email: RLGProgramme@wales.gsi.gov.uk

App. 2. Draft Revised National Training Strategy 2015-2019

Training and development of Councils and their employees is fundamental to the success of community and town councils as they face up to the ever growing challenges of devolution of services and community asset transfers as well as supporting the potential re-structuring of the sector currently featuring as a component of the local government reform agenda in Wales. The recent completion of the draft revised national training strategy which is attached is very timely and it is hoped that it will engender considerable interest within the sector.

The draft Strategy is a joint production of the National Training Advisory Group (NTAG) which comprises representatives of One Voice Wales, Society of Local Council Clerks, Welsh Local Government Association and Welsh Government.

It is important that we receive feedback from your Council on the general approach to training contained in the draft and this communication represents an open invitation for you to become involved in finalising the draft strategy.

You are requested to share the draft strategy with your Council and to express the views of the Council via an electronic survey (Survey Monkey software) which contains questions for your Council to address. **Only one response per Council is permitted.**

The web-links to gain access to the survey are as follows:-

English:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Nationaltrainingstrategyforwales>