

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE
OF PONTYPOOL COMMUNITY COUNCIL
HELD REMOTELY USING MICROSOFT TEAMS ON
WEDNESDAY 7 JULY 2021 AT 6.30PM**

In attendance:

Councillor: Norma Parrish (In the Chair)

and Councillors: Lynda Clarkson, Elizabeth Hunt, Gaynor James, John Killick, Richard Overton

Officers: Cindy Challenger (Finance and Events Manager), Richard Gwinnell (Acting Clerk), Lisa McMail (Accountant) and Ruth Tucker (Clerk)

Absent: Councillors Giles Davies, Matthew Ford, Adrian Lang and Barry Taylor

Observing: Councillor Ben Rapier (not a member of the committee)

84. **Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Adrian Lang and Councillor Barry Taylor JP.

85. **Declarations of Interest**

Councillors Lynda Clarkson, Gaynor James, John Killick, Norma Parrish and Richard Overton declared personal and non-prejudicial interests in any agenda items relating to Torfaen County Borough Council (TCBC) as they were members of TCBC, as well as members of Pontypool Community Council.

JW

Councillor Elizabeth Hunt declared personal and non-prejudicial interests in the grounds maintenance grant applications from Fairfield United AFC, Griffithstown Junior Football Club and Panteg Cricket Club, as her son played for those teams.

JW

Councillor Norma Parrish declared a personal and non-prejudicial interest in the grounds maintenance grant application from New Panteg RFC, as her husband was a member of the club.

JW

86. **Schedule of Receipts and Payments**

The Finance and Events Manager presented the schedule of receipts and payments for April 2021.

A member queried the payment for the lease of units 8 and 9 (Pontnewynydd industrial estate), as the Council ceased to occupy unit 9 in May 2019. The Clerk explained that the lease was still active, and so the fees had to be paid, pending a new legal agreement, which was being progressed and chased. When the new lease was signed, any overpayment would be refunded to the Council.

RECOMMENDED: that the schedule of receipts and payments for April 2021 be approved.

87. **Use of Credit Card**

The Finance and Events Manager presented the schedule of credit card payments made in April 2021.

RECOMMENDED: that the payments made with the Council's credit card in April 2021 be approved.

88. **Financial Budget Comparison (Monitoring Report)**

The Accountant presented the financial monitoring report to the end of April 2021.

RECOMMENDED: that the financial monitoring report to the end of April 2021 be approved and the information contained in it be noted.

89. **Interest Rates/Public Sector Deposit Account**

The committee received a report from the Accountant, which she outlined, providing information on current interest rates and the options for the Council about where it invested its funds. She and the Internal Auditor considered that security of investment was the primary consideration (with interest rates a secondary consideration) and that the CCLA remained the most secure depository of funds, given that the funds were invested over a diverse portfolio and the funds deposited were guaranteed (regardless of whether interest rates were negative).

Members discussed the fact that a very small amount of interest could be received if the Council invested its funds with the Monmouthshire Building Society (MBS) (£450 per annum at 0.5% interest) but that the MBS was a less secure investment, compared to the CCLA, so the balanced recommendation presented by the Accountant and supported by the Internal Auditor was the most sensible. Questions were also asked about whether the funds were invested ethically. No information was available on that at this meeting, but further information was requested (by Councillor Rapier) in due course. It was reported that the CCLA had an Ethical and Responsible Investment Team, to ensure investments were ethical.

RECOMMENDED: that the Council maintain its investment and future surplus funds with the Public Sector Deposit Account (CCLA) for the reasons set out in detail in the report.

90. **CCLA**

The committee considered a report of the Accountant, which she outlined, giving members information on the likelihood of negative interest rates in the near future, given current market conditions, and the measures the CCLA was taking to protect investors' funds.

RECOMMENDED: that the Council note that the necessary controls have been put in place by the fund managers to protect the Council's investment and to maintain that investment while interest rates are low.

91. **2020/21 Financial Year-end Out-turn**

The Accountant presented and explained the financial year-end out-turn for the last financial year.

RECOMMENDED: that the out-turn be noted.

92. **Local Voluntary Funding**

The committee considered the following Local Voluntary Funding applications (noting that all LVF applications had been checked by the Finance and Events Manager):

Councillor Rosemary Matthews

Groves Painters and Decorators - £1,200 (Project)

Power of Well Being s2 LGA 2000

Councillor Giles Davies

Ward Scarecrow Competition - £125 (Project)

Power of Well Being s2 LGA 2000

Councillor Lynda Clarkson

Ward Scarecrow Competition - £125 (Project)

Power of Well Being s2 LGA 2000

Councillor Clarkson pointed out that the above was her project, so she may have to declare an interest. The Chair pointed out that this did not constitute a personal interest.

RECOMMENDED: that the LVF applications above be approved.

93.

Grounds Maintenance Grants Applications

The Chair explained that grant applications had been received in respect of 26 sports pitches. With a budget of £8,000 available, this enabled a grant of £300 per pitch.

CC

RECOMMENDED: that grounds maintenance grants of £300 each be awarded to the following groups:

Cwmffrwdoer Sports Club (3 Pitches)
Fairfield United AFC (1 Pitch)
Fairfield United Mini and Juniors (2 Pitches)
Garndiffaith Bowls Club (1 Pitch)
Garndiffaith RFC (2 Pitches)
Griffithstown Junior Football Club (2 Pitches)
New Inn AFC (1 Pitch)
New Panteg RFC (3 Pitches)
Panteg Cricket Club (1 Pitch)
Panteg Parks Bowls Club (1 Pitch)
Penygarn and Trevethin JAFC (2 Pitches)
Pilcs FC (1 Pitch)
Pontnewynydd AFC (1 Pitch)
Pontnewynydd Cricket Club (1 Pitch)
Pontypool Park Girling Bowls Club (1 Pitch)
Pontypool Town AFC (1 Pitch)
Sebastopol Juniors AFC (1 Pitch)
West Mon RFC (1 Pitch).

CC/
AA

94. **Notice Boards**

The Finance and Events Manager explained that the notice board at the top of St. Mary's Street (off Greenway Drive, Griffithstown) required replacement, as did several other notice boards in the Pontypool Community Council area. Replacing existing wooden notice boards with steel-constructed notice boards would ensure they lasted longer and would present a better appearance. If no planning permission was needed (e.g., where boards already existed) the cost was around £3,000 per notice board. In answer to a question, she also reported that the notice boards were kept up to date as much as possible, but Covid had affected this. Efforts were being made to update them all.

RECOMMENDED: that a report and quotations be submitted to the committee as soon as possible in respect of all the notice boards which need replacing.

CC

95. **Applications for annual funding for running costs**

RECOMMENDED: the committee noted that three applications had been received to date and that more were anticipated. All applications would be submitted to the committee at the same time (in September).

CC

96. **Requests for financial assistance**

The committee received a request for financial assistance from the Llantarnam Grange Arts Centre. Grants of £200 and £500 were proposed and voted on. With 4 votes for £500, the committee:

RECOMMENDED: that a grant of £500 be awarded to the Llantarnam Grange Arts Centre.

CC

97. **Standing Orders**

The committee received proposed revised model standing orders, for onward recommendation to the Council.

The Acting Clerk and the Governance Working Group were thanked for all their efforts in bringing these standing orders forward for adoption.

RECOMMENDED: that the revised model standing orders be adopted (by the Council).

RG

98. **Internal Audit report 2020/21 - Action Plan**

The committee received a proposed action plan, to address the report of the Internal Auditor about the 2020/21 accounts. The Clerk explained that the action plan would be updated as actions progressed and reported back to members in due course.

It was suggested that the action plan be amended to reflect that the Council (on 23 June) had already reviewed the local voluntary funding scheme and that the Council had already decided that it was good value for money.

RECOMMENDED: that the actions taken or being taken to address the report of the Internal Auditor be noted, subject to the above amendment.

RG

99. **Thank you letter**

RECOMMENDED: that the thank you letter from the Retired Police Dogs of Gwent be received and noted.

Signed by the Chair: