

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE
OF PONTYPOOL COMMUNITY COUNCIL
HELD REMOTELY USING MICROSOFT TEAMS ON
WEDNESDAY 6 OCTOBER 2021 AT 6.30PM**

In attendance:

Councillor: Norma Parrish (in the Chair)

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

Officers: Cindy Challenger (Finance and Events Manager) and Richard Gwinnell (Acting Clerk)

188.	<p><u>Apologies for absence</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Giles Davies and Elizabeth Hunt.</p> <p>Councillors Matt Ford, Adrian Lang and Barry Taylor JP were absent.</p>	
189.	<p><u>Declarations of Interest</u></p> <p>Councillors Lynda Clarkson, Gaynor James, John Killick and Norma Parrish 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.</p> <p><u>RECOMMENDED:</u> that the Declarations of Interest be recorded.</p>	JW
190.	<p><u>Schedule of Receipts and Payments</u></p> <p>The Finance and Events (F&E) Manager presented the schedule of receipts and payments for July 2021.</p> <p><u>RECOMMENDED:</u> that the schedule of receipts and payments for July 2021 be approved.</p>	
191.	<p><u>Use of Credit Card</u></p> <p>The Finance and Events Manager presented the schedule of credit card payments made in July 2021. In response to a question from the Chair, the F&E Manager confirmed that the youth project spending was not reimbursed, but was budgeted for separately.</p>	

	<u>RECOMMENDED:</u> that the payments made with the Council's credit card in July 2021 be approved.	
192.	<p><u>Financial Budget Comparison (Monitoring Report)</u></p> <p>The Committee received and considered the financial monitoring report to the end of July 2021. The F&E Manager responded to questions and comments from members (in brief) that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Christmas lights budget was £60k (with c£40k committed so far this year) • the Christmas trees budget was £35k (with c£30k committed so far this year) • she would need to double check the Christmas lights reserve and report back • the play equipment reserve was c£38k • she would ask all members to submit bids for new play equipment, in line with the usual procedures • the spending (of c£19k) recently agreed, to provide a disabled accessible roundabout at Pontypool Park, would come from the play equipment reserve • amalgamating the Youth Council delegated budget (£1,250) with the Youth Project budget (£53,000) would be sensible, as suggested by the Deputy Leader of the Council (as one item of equipment purchased may benefit both the Youth Council and the Youth Project for example). <p>In addition to asking the questions referred to above, members also commented/discussed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that the full costs for the purchase and installation of the accessible roundabout would need to be assessed before members were asked for other bids for play equipment • the amalgamation of the Youth Council and Youth Project budgets would need to be discussed further as part of the budget preparations for 2022/23 • members had also asked that potential match funding sources be investigated before the accessible roundabout was progressed; this could reduce the cost to the Council • more play equipment was needed at Pontypool Park (and in other parks); not just the accessible roundabout • the playground at Pontypool Park was very heavily used, especially during good weather and more so since the advent of the Covid pandemic • play equipment should be provided for other age groups and the surface area of the playground could be extended • an additional Project Officer may need to be employed, to 	<p>CC</p> <p>CC</p> <p>CC</p> <p>RT</p>

	<p>progress joint working with TCBC and funding bids (to extend the playground and undertake other projects)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TCBC would welcome such projects, if the Community Council was willing to pay • extending the playground and providing new equipment, in partnership with TCBC, and exploring other avenues of funding would be very well supported. <p>NB Councillor Overton entered the meeting during the above question and answer session.</p> <p>RECOMMENDED: that the financial monitoring report to the end of July 2021 be approved and the information contained in it be noted.</p>	
193.	<p><u>Christmas Tree at Pontypool Park Gates (Hanbury Road)</u></p> <p>The Chair reminded members that the Community Council traditionally provided Christmas trees, including the tree on Hanbury Road (at the park gates, opposite the Civic Centre). TCBC had in the past reimbursed the Community Council for the costs of the tree at the park gates but had indicated that they could no longer do so. The Community Council would need to decide whether to pay for that tree therefore, from now on. Her view was that the tree should be provided and paid for by the Community Council, in light of public expectations.</p> <p>The Finance and Events Manager confirmed that the costs of that tree and the lights in that tree (approximately £2,000 per annum) could be met from the current budget.</p> <p>Other members of the Committee commented (in brief) that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • they supported paying for the tree, but this was another example of the County Borough Council ceasing to pay for or provide services and passing the responsibility and costs down to the Community Council • further discussions were needed with TCBC as this was not sustainable • Pontypool was different to Cwmbran (where the town centre and Christmas decorations were paid for by a management company and funded by shops and traders) • people would be more content for the Community Council to pay for Christmas lights and trees etc if TCBC improved other services to the town (e.g. CCTV and cleanliness) • the boundaries between what TCBC provided and what 	

	<p>Community Councils were increasingly being asked to pay for needed to be clearer.</p> <p>RECOMMENDED: that the Community Council meet the costs of the Christmas tree on Hanbury Road (at the park gates opposite the Civic Centre) this year and going forward.</p>	CC
194.	<p><u>Budget Day</u></p> <p>The Deputy Leader commented that the Council needed to focus on its high-level priorities going forward, before looking at the budget line by line.</p> <p>RECOMMENDED: that the Budget Day be held at 5pm on Tuesday 30 November 2021 (subject to notification to all members and a later start time if 5pm is too early for a large number of members).</p>	CC
195.	<p><u>Local Voluntary Funding (LVF)</u></p> <p>The committee considered the following LVF applications (noting that all LVF applications had been checked by the Finance and Events Manager):</p> <p><u>Councillor G. Davies</u></p> <p>Cwmavon Village Hall - £500 (to help with painting costs) <i>Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, s.19</i></p> <p>Hanbury Arms Racing Pigeon Club - £200 (running costs and club equipment) <i>s.137 LGA 1972/Power of Well Being s2 LGA 2000</i></p> <p><u>Councillor Mrs J. E. Jones</u></p> <p>Penygarn and Trevethin AFC - £500 (running costs) <i>Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, s.19</i></p> <p>RESOLVED: that the LVF applications above be approved.</p>	CC
196.	<p><u>Embedding the Youth Project</u></p> <p>The Committee considered a report of the Clerk, proposing that the Youth Project be embedded into the service offering of Pontypool Community Council.</p> <p>The Deputy Leader commended the proposals and commented that</p>	

	<p>this would benefit the Council and the staff, insofar as embedding the Youth Project into the Council’s service would provide continuity and security, as well as increase the number of staff available to deliver across all of the Council’s services (not just for the Youth project).</p> <p>The Chair reminded members that the Council had previously employed other staff (including a Benefit Adviser) and this had worked well.</p> <p><u>RECOMMENDED:</u></p> <p>(1) That, from 1 April 2022, the Youth Project is embedded into the service offering of Pontypool Community Council and Youth Project staff are employed within the staffing establishment of Pontypool Community Council (in the same way as all other staff are and as Task Force staff were previously)</p> <p>(2) That the budget for staffing for the Youth Project (£45,500 in 2021/22) be built into the general staffing budget heading for the start of the 2022/23 financial year</p> <p>(3) That the equipment and transport element of the Youth Project (£7,500 in 2021/22) be built into the Youth Project budget for 2022/23 and</p> <p>(4) That, in the budgetary discussions for 2022/23, Council considers increasing the training budget for Council staff, to ensure that Youth Project staff may also access the training they need.</p>	<p>RT CC LM</p> <p>RT LM</p> <p>RT LM</p> <p>RT LM</p>
197.	<p><u>Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021: Local Impact Assessment and Action Plan</u></p> <p>The Committee considered an assessment of the local impact of the above Act, and an action plan to ensure the Council complied with it, submitted by the Acting Clerk and Governance Working Group.</p> <p>The Acting Clerk outlined the local impact assessment and action plan, commenting that the Council was already complying with the new Act in many respects (e.g. hybrid meetings and electronic publication of agendas), that some new requirements could be implemented by staff without formal Council approval (e.g. quick notes of meetings) and some issues would require further Council approval at a later date (e.g. formal agreement to multi-location meeting arrangements). The impact assessment/action plan was for members’ information at this stage and would go on to the Council, so that all members were appropriately informed.</p>	

	<p>Comments were made by various members that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the local impact assessment and action plan was very well laid out and easy to understand • the new Act required a significant amount of extra work for the Council; this work was very important • implementing the requirements would ensure the Council had the best possible start to the 2022-2027 electoral term. <p>Members thanked the Acting Clerk.</p> <p><u>RECOMMENDED</u>: that the information be noted.</p>	
198.	<p><u>Internal Audit 2020/21: Action Plan update</u></p> <p>The Committee considered an update of the action plan, drawn up to address the report of the Internal Auditor about the 2020/21 accounts, submitted by the Acting Clerk and the Governance Working Group.</p> <p>The Chair commented on the good work involved in this action plan and thanked the Acting Clerk.</p> <p><u>RECOMMENDED</u>: that the update be noted.</p>	
199.	<p><u>Review of Council Policies</u></p> <p>The Committee considered a schedule of existing and proposed policies, with key dates and priorities, submitted by the Acting Clerk and the Governance Working Group.</p> <p>The Deputy Leader commented on the extent and importance of the work involved in the policy review and commended the quality of the work being done.</p> <p>The Chair thanked the Acting Clerk and the Governance Working Group for all their work on this review.</p> <p><u>RECOMMENDED</u>: that progress on the review of Council policies be noted.</p>	
200.	<p><u>Policies proposed for adoption</u></p> <p>The Committee considered the following policies which were proposed for adoption (subject to approval by the Council) by the Acting Clerk and the Governance Working Group:</p>	

	<p>(a) Health and Safety Policy (b) Pay Policy (c) Workplace Menopause Policy (d) Training and Development Policy (e) Pensions Policies and Discretions.</p> <p>The Acting Clerk briefly outlined key issues and responded to questions.</p> <p><u>RECOMMENDED</u>: that the above policies be adopted (subject to Council approval).</p>	
201.	<p><u>Thank you letter</u></p> <p>The Committee received a letter from Griffithstown AFC, thanking the Council for their grounds maintenance grant.</p> <p><u>RECOMMENDED</u>: that the letter be noted.</p>	

Chair