

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Pontardawe Town Council held on Monday 10th November 2014, at Trebanos Hall, Swansea Road, Pontardawe commencing at 6.45pm

9715. Present Councillors B Thomas (presiding), Mrs J Bowen, D Harris, G Davies, Mrs E Puzey, H Pickrell, V Hotten, B Williams, Mrs L Purcell, Mrs R Phillips, M James and Ms C Ford.
Youth Representatives – Harri Evans – Mason

Apologies: Councillor H Evans, Ms S Northcott and A Nicholson.

9716. Disclosure of Personal and Pecuniary interests: Councillors Mrs J Bowen, G Davies and V Hotten declared an interest in the Pontardawe and District Youth Facility, Councillor M James declared an interest in any discussions on 'The Cross' community centre at Pontardawe.

Resolved this be noted.

9717. Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on the 13th October 2014:

Resolved that the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on 13th October 2014, having been read and confirmed as a true record, be accepted by Council.

9718. Former Sergeant Andy Abrahams: Council welcomed former Sergeant Andy Abrahams to the meeting and presented him with a copper faced presentation clock in recognition of the excellent service to the community during his thirty years service with South Wales Police. Councillors' Brian Thomas, Mike James and Bob Williams spoke during the presentation and added the Town Councils best wishes for his future endeavors.

Former Sergeant Abrahams thanked the Town Council for their gift, their support and their best wishes. He stated that he had made many friends during his service and was proud of what had been achieved by the partnerships developed between the police service, the Town Council and the local community.

Resolved to be noted.

9719. Matters raised by members of the public: None.

Resolved to be noted.

9720. Police Matters: The Clerk provided the following information:

Pontardawe:

The next PACT meeting was to be held on the 11/12/14 at The Cross Community Centre commencing at 6.30pm.

At Parc Chwarae Teg the residents association had been asked to close the park earlier to deter older individuals from congregating. Additional patrols had also been scheduled to deter anti – social behavior.

Patrols were also ongoing outside Languicke School to deter speeding and dangerous parking.

Trebanos:

The next PACT meeting was to be held on the 11/12/14 at Trebanos Hall commencing at 6.30pm.

Additional patrols at night had been scheduled to deter anti social behavior at the park. These were to be ongoing.

The Clerk confirmed that she had once again requested Welsh Walter close the barrier adjacent to the park when not in use, however no response had been received.

The Clerk also read a letter from Sector Inspector Andy Davies who had replaced Inspector Huw Griffiths as the Local policing Inspector.

Resolved to be noted.

9721. Pontardawe & District Youth Facility: Councillors G Davies, V Hotten and Mrs J Bowen expressed an interest.

Council was advised that the Pontardawe and District Youth Facility had received no financial assistance for the 2014/15 fiscal year to date from Pontardawe Town Council and therefore there was still £10,000 from the budget available. The general Youth club was still operating once a week and the specialist youth club, twice a week during school terms.

The Trustees were also discussing the facility with another self funding group, who may wish to utilise the office during the day.

Resolved to be noted.

9722. Out of School activities brochure: The Clerk confirmed that the final draft had been agreed and was to be forwarded to the printers by the end of the week. Once the printed brochures were available they would be distributed to the schools and the web site and social media pages would become ‘live’

Resolved to be noted.

9723. Allotment Provision: Council was advised that Cilybebyll Community Council were still in the process of reviewing the provision of allotments.

Resolved that the Clerk will keep Council up to date with developments which should be available by the December meeting.

9724. Cwmdu Glen: Council was advised that Neath Port Talbot Council had agreed to alter the plan to include the portion of the path from Rhyd y Fro to the 'Green Bridge' as a separate area for review. It was also acknowledged that grant funding may be required to improve this portion of the path.

With regard to the Town Council's request to add allotments at the 'Walled Garden' at Glanrhyd, it was felt by the County Borough that allotments would not be feasible due to the lack of a water supply, insufficient car parking and the scale and nature of the work that would have been required to prepare the site.

Resolved that the Town Council will agree the amended Cwmdu Management plan.

9725. Christmas lights provision 2014: The Clerk confirmed that the Policy and Resources Committee had discussed the matter in detail. She also provided a brief overview of the festivities arranged.

These were as follows:

- The Christmas tree had been purchased and was being transported to Clydach by 'Vale' free of charge. The Clerk had arranged for a local HIAB contractor to transport the tree from Clydach to Pontardawe Art Centre on the 18th November.
- Tree lights had been purchased from the grant from 'Mynydd y Betws'
- The Town Council would fund the erection of two of the cross road banners, the Christmas tree transport from Clydach, the erection and dressing of the Christmas tree and the electricity that would be utilised by the decorations.
- The Clerk was also looking into placing limited festive lighting at 'The Cross'
- The Town Council had also arranged insurance cover for the tree and banners.
- The lights would be switched on during the 'Winterfest' due to take place on the 5th December 2014 when a parade with a brass band would process from 'The Cross' to the Art Centre. The procession would include the flags produced by the children. Santa and the Mayor would also arrive via the procession.
- Santa's grotto together with a craft market was to be available at the 'Art Centre'.
- Many of the shops on Herbert Street were to take part in the 'Christmas Window competition' which was to be judged by the Mayor and a trophy provided by the Town Council for the winner.
- Pontardawe Car Sales, the Gwrhyd Quarry and Lliw Building supplies had provided funds towards the Christmas decorations.
- It had been agreed that a meeting was to be held in January 2015 to review the success of the festivities for 2014 and to plan for 2015.

Resolved to be noted.

9726. Swansea Road Crossing: Council was advised that the 20 mph speed restriction adjacent to the 'Avenue' roundabout was advisory only and therefore could not be enforced by the Police.

The Clerk did however state that she had attended a meeting with Councillor Bob Williams who was a Cwmtawe School Governor and the head teacher at Cwmtawe School to determine what information had been received in total.

We were advised that the school had contacted the County Borough with their concerns and it had been agreed that the bus shelter on Swansea Road would be turned to improve the visibility for pedestrians. It was also agreed that Cwmtawe School would contact the County Borough to determine the costs associated with the placement of a zebra crossing.

Resolved that Council will be informed of developments.

9727. Model Standing Orders: The Clerk confirmed that she had received clarification from 'One Voice Wales' on the right of referral to the Ombudsman. She confirmed that the Town Council's recourse was always through the Ombudsman and therefore there was no need to include this in the Standing Orders.

He did however state that the Town Council could add this to the Standing Orders adopted by Pontardawe Town Council to clarify the position if it was felt necessary.

Resolved that the Clerk will provide a paragraph to clarify the situation which can be added to the Standing Orders. The additional paragraph can be agreed at the next meeting.

9728. The Cross Community Centre: Council discussed in detail the consultation currently in progress on the future of 'the Cross' Community Centre.

They were unhappy that the Town Council had not been notified at all prior to a County Borough Members request to inform them.

Overall it was agreed that the advertisement of the Public meeting had been poorly organised with very little notice given to member of the public. Despite the lack of communication however the meeting was well attended.

It was however agreed that the meeting did not provide sufficient detail on the costs associated with running the centre. It was also agreed that additional time was required in order to look at alternatives.

Council believed that the Cross Community Centre provided a valuable asset to the Community and that it needed to be retained, however it due to the running costs, the Town Council was not in a position to take over the running of the community centre itself.

It was however stated that of the £50,000 cost savings required, £34,000 had already been identified.

Resolved that the Town Council request additional time be allocated to identify cost savings as £34,000 of the £50,000 requirement had already been identified.

It was also agreed that the charging structure at the facility needed review to determine fair costs for community groups who utilised the facility as a community centre and small businesses who utilised the facility as a business centre as the charging structure should reflect different charges for non profit and profit making businesses.

9729. Planning: It was agreed to arrange a planning meeting at 6.00pm on the 17th November 2014.

Resolved to be noted.

9730. Policy & Resources Committee held on the 20th October 2014 – to review the Welsh Language Commissioners draft enforcement policy – Public Consultation (Plenary Powers awarded):

The Committee reviewed the document in full prior to the meeting. The committee consisted of a number of Members who were fluent in the Welsh Language and who currently conducted their lives through the medium of Welsh.

They referred to the statements underpinning the document which were that the Welsh Language should be treated no less favourably than the English Language in Wales and that persons in Wales should be able to live their lives through the medium of the Welsh Language if they choose to do so. There was however no mention of the Welsh Language Schemes currently adopted by Town and Community Councils.

The Committee felt it was vital that any enforcement document was written with the Welsh Language Schemes at its focal point as the schemes underpinned the Communities communication needs in this area.

The Committee felt that the document had been issued with no thought to the financial ramifications during a time of austerity and provided no additional funds. It had also been provided without any investigation into the actual needs of the communities or how these could be met realistically.

The Committee was a great supporter of the Welsh Language but felt that all communication with the electorate was important.

The view of the Committee was that the document was draconian and unnecessary, and would ultimately prove to be counterproductive.

The committee recommended that their comments be forwarded in response to the consultation.

Resolved that the Committee's decision be ratified.

9731. Policy & Resources Committee held on the 20th October 2014- The committee discussed the withdrawal of Subsidised bus services (Plenary Powers awarded):

The Clerk provided the Committee with details of the three options for the removal/ change of subsidised bus services in Neath Port Talbot. The Committee however were concerned that the reductions had been carried out with only the relative cost savings without a review of the needs of the communities.

The Committee recommended that the County Borough review the level of service usage initially to ensure that any cuts had the least impact on the populace.

Resolved that the Committee's decision be ratified.

9732. Policy & Resources Committee held on the 20th October 2014- Review of the Independent remuneration panel for Wales 2015/16 Annual Report:

The Committee had been provided with the document prior to the meeting and had reviewed it in full.

The Committee recommended that the document was noted.

Resolved that the Committee's decision be ratified.

9733. Policy & Resources Committee held on the 30th October 2014 -The Committee discussed the final arrangement for the provision of Christmas lights and decorations at Pontardawe for 2014. (Plenary Powers awarded)

The Clerk provided the committee with details of the arrangements that had been made for the 'Winterfest' including details of the torchlight procession, Christmas grotto and the 'switching on' of the lights.

The Clerk confirmed that through sponsorship by local businesses the cost of the tree and transportation to Pontardawe had been covered. The cost of the Tree lights was covered by the grant from Mynydd y Betws Wind Farm. The grant also covered the flag project managed by the Art Centre which would provide flags for the flag poles in Pontardawe for festivals.

The provision of pea lights for the trees at Herbert Street and the Cross were however not feasible without recourse to additional grant funding which could not be achieved in the current time scales.

In order to provide the cross road banners it was suggested that the County Borough be employed for the Christmas of 2014 to put up and take down the banner stating 'Welcome to Pontardawe' and Croeso

i Bontardawe, as the decoration were to be provided for free and the costs of installation and removal were more cost effective than commercial suppliers.

It was also suggested that the Clerk look into battery powered lights for the small trees on 'the Cross' to determine if it was cost effective and feasible to dress the trees for the season.

The committee was also happy to recommend that the Town Council purchase small trophies for the 'Best Dressed Window' competition that should be judged by the Mayor.

It was the Committees view that the Mayor of Neath Port Talbot not be asked to open the festivities as no funding was provided for the Christmas season from Neath Port Talbot. It was the wish of the committee that the Pontardawe Town Mayor 'switch on the lights' at Pontardawe this year.

The Clerk confirmed that a number of other organizations in Pontardawe were interested in providing some sponsorship however they were at present unable to commit to an actual amount.

It was recommended that the Town Council approach Neath Port Talbot Council to place the Christmas banners for the Christmas 2014 season and settle the associated costs from funds currently held in general reserve. Any additional sponsorship would reduce the funding impact on the Town Council.

It was recommended that the Clerk purchase a trophy for the winning window from the 'Best Dressed Window' competition.

It was recommended that the Clerk look at the feasibility of lights for the small trees on the cross.

It was also recommended that the Town Council organize a meeting in January 2015 in order to review the possibility of obtaining grants to fund permanent pea lights on 'the cross' and on the trees adjacent to the Herbert Street Car Park as this would in the long run reduce the expenditure necessary to 'Light up Pontardawe' for the Christmas season.

Resolved that the Committee's decision be ratified.

9734. Accounts Schedule 305 and Bank Reconciliation:

Resolved to accept the schedule 305 totaling £12462.81 together with the bank reconciliation, in line with Standing Orders.

9735. SLCC Annual Membership: Council agreed to pay the subscription of £184 for the year.

Resolved to be noted.

9736. Mid & West Wales Fire and Rescue Public Consultation: The document had been reviewed in full prior to the meeting.

Resolved to be noted.

9737. Neath Port Talbot Annual Report and Summary for 2013/14: The document had been reviewed in full prior to the meeting.

Resolved to be noted.

9738. Email received re pavements in Pontardawe: An email had been received from a concerned local resident stating that the pavements in Pontardawe required a deep clean. The County Borough had however carried out a deep clean prior to Remembrance Sunday.

Resolved to be noted.

9739. Hanging Basket Scheme Summer 2015: It was agreed that the Summer Hanging basket scheme was very popular with both the residents, visitors and retail outlets in Pontardawe. The Clerk confirmed that the cost of the baskets had increased slightly from the summer of 2014 from £55 to £57.75 each however this was for a fully maintained display for the whole of the Summer Season.

Resolved that the Town Council will provide a Hanging Basket display for the summer of 2015.

9740. Bylaws in relation to Hackney Carriages: Council was advised that Neath Port Talbot Council had served a copy of the regulation with the Town Council in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972.

Resolved to be noted.

9741. Gower AONB Management Plan: The Plan was reviewed by Council prior to the meeting.

Resolved to be noted.

9742. Email received re grants to Town/Community Councils for Public Rights of Way: Council was advised that the County Borough were considering removing the grants for Town and Community Councils to maintain the footpaths in their area from 2015/16. For Pontardawe Town Council this would effectively remove over £4000 from the Town Council's annual income.

The Town Clerk confirmed that should the Town Council then not be in a position to maintain the paths then the legal responsibility would remain with the County Borough.

It is therefore unlikely that the County Borough would achieve any cost savings as additional staff would be required to service the paths in the Town Council's area. The grant provided was already a very cost effective method of fulfilling the County Boroughs legal responsibility.

Resolved that the Clerk will advise the County Borough that should the grant be withdrawn then the Town Council would be unable to provide the maintenance required and the costs would therefore need to be bourn directly by the County Borough.

9743. Urgent Road Safety Matters: Council was advised that there was a significant problem with a culvert between Dan y Graig Road and Lloyd Street at Trebanos. The culvert was blocked with leaves and had insufficient barriers to prevent children falling into the water. Councillor R Phillips was looking into the matter however it was agreed that the Town Council could also make representation to the County Borough.

Resolved that the Clerk will contact the County Borough

9744. Date and time of next meeting: The date of the next Ordinary Meeting of Council will be Monday 8th December 2014 at Ynysmeudwy Hall commencing at 6.45pm.

Signed **Dated**