

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Pontardawe Town Council held on Monday 11th May 2015, at Trebanos Hall, Swansea Road, Trebanos, Pontardawe commencing at 6.45pm

9898. Present Councillors D B Thomas (presiding), P Williams, Mrs J Bowen, V Hotten, B Williams, H Evans, Ms S Northcott, A Nicholson, D Harris, Mrs L Purcell, Ms C Ford, Mrs R Phillips and G Davies.

Youth Representatives – Harri Evans-Mason

Apologies: Councillor H Pickrell and Mrs E Puzey together with Youth Representative Thomas Hutchins.

9899. Disclosure of Personal and Pecuniary interests: Councillors Mrs J Bowen, A Nicholson, Ms S Northcott, G Davies and V Hotten declared an interest in the Pontardawe and District Youth Facility. Councillor H Evans declared an interest in planning at Quarr Road, Pontardawe as he is a neighbor. Councillors Ms S Northcott & A Nicholson declared an interest in PANTRY as they are Trustees. Councillor Ms S Northcott & A Nicholson declared an interest in St Peters Church as they are Members. Councillors Ms S Northcott, A Nicholson, B Williams, Mrs L Purcell and H Evans declared an interest in Clive Reeds letter as they are all close personal friends.

Resolved this be noted.

9900. Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on the 13th April 2015:

Resolved that the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on 13th April 2015, having been read and confirmed as a true record, be accepted by Council with the following amendment; in minute number 9872 Ysgol Gunradd Gymraeg should read Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg.

9901. Matters raised by members of the public: Council was advised that there was insufficient signage at 'The Cross' in Pontardawe to direct Members of the Public to Ammanford and the A474.

Resolved to be noted.

9902. PANTRY: Councillor Vince Hotten provided Council with details of the help provided since its inception as Pontardawe Town Council originally granted £500 to the organisation. He explained that PANTRY operated from Tabernacle Chapel in Pontardawe on Saturdays and Tuesdays and had provided assistance to over 260 people. PANTRY received donations from members of the public together with bread from 'Jenkins' and had piloted a greengrocer voucher scheme to provide additional fresh produce. They were also working in partnership with local charity shops to provide clothing.

The organisation believed in a holistic approach to aid and was therefore also working with local government and third party sector providers to provide specialist support in areas such as housing and domestic violence.

Councillor Hotten also provided details of a 'Time Credits' Scheme whereby volunteers would receive benefit such as cinema tickets for hours volunteered, by way of thanks. Council thanked Councillor Hotten and all the volunteers for their work with PANTRY and supported the scheme for 'Time Credits' for volunteers.

Resolved that the Clerk will write to support the 'Time Credits' for volunteers programme on behalf of Council.

9903. Police Matters: The Clerk provided the following information:

Trebanos:

The next PACT meeting was to be held on the 18/6/15 at Trebanos Hall commencing at 6.30pm. Crimes for March 2015 for Trebanos were – 1 (Vehicle Crime).

Pontardawe:

The next PACT meeting was to be held on the 11/6/15 at The Art Centre, Pontardawe at 6.30pm. Councillor Purcell confirmed that the Art Centre would remain the venue as it was provided free.

Crimes for March 2015 for Pontardawe were – Burglary 2, Anti Social Behaviour 17, Robbery – 1, Vehicle crime 8, violent crime 9, Public Disorder 4, Shoplifting 2, Criminal Damage 5, Other Theft 3, Drugs – 3, other crime - 3 – Total 57.

The Clerk confirmed that there had been no response from the Police to her request for a private meeting however Councillor Purcell did confirm that an additional Police presence 'on the beat' in Pontardawe would specifically target areas of concern such as Youths outside the Art Centre.

The Clerk also confirmed that the new PCSO Sian Williams would be arranging the future Youth PACT meetings and that she was in touch with Harri Evans-Mason one of the Town Council's Youth Representative.

Council was then advised that noise levels from the Football Club at Pontardawe were once again creating difficulties.

Councillor Purcell reiterated that in the event of excess noise levels from establishments it was important to telephone Neath Port Talbot Council on 01639 686868 as if three or more complaints were received action would be taken by the out of hours team. It was however important to keep a record of the time and date the call was made.

Resolved that the Clerk will once again contact South Wales Police, to request a special meeting with Sergeant Jayne James, together with the local Inspector for the Western Division.

9904. Pontardawe & District Youth Facility: Councillors V Hotten, A Nicholson, Ms S Northcott, G Davies and Mrs J Bowen expressed an interest.

Council was advised that the Pontardawe and District Youth Facility had as yet received no assistance for 2015/16.

With regard to the Balloon race that was held to celebrate the Youth Club's 5th Birthday, the winning balloon was found in Germany.

Resolved to be noted.

9905. Trebanos Park: Council was advised that the park refurbishment had commenced and was on track. In accordance with Council's wishes the Town Council would support the cost of a small additional portion of safety surfacing for aesthetic purposes at the top of the infants slide. It was also decided to retain the wooden fence at the Junior Park.

The Clerk also confirmed that on the advice of the County Borough, no additional action should be taken by the Town Council with regard to the Groundworks administration.

Unfortunately Council was also advised that the fledgling trees planted at the Park and Rugby Ground had been destroyed following unauthorized cutting of the grass at both the Rugby Ground and the Park. The Clerk was in the process of identifying the culprits.

Resolved that the cost of the area of safety surfacing at the top of the infants slide will be borne by Council, but that no additional action will be taken by the Town Council in respect of the Groundworks administration.

9906. Footpath Grant and Cwmdu Management: The Clerk confirmed that the Joint Management Plan for Cwmdu was in the process of being created. Also nesting boxes had been placed at strategic point within Cwmdu Glen.

It had also been brought to the Council's attention that trees on the Town Council's land had been lopped by a home owner adjacent to the site without the Council's permission.

Resolved that the Council's solicitors will be asked to write officially to the residents responsible for the unauthorized cut and that the Clerk will also request the County Borough organize a 'Cwmdu Glen' joint committee to discuss the way forward with the management plan.

9907. Pelican/Zebra crossing requests: Councillor Phillips confirmed that her investigations were still with the legal department at Neath Port Talbot Council so there was nothing further to report on the proposed crossing at Swansea Road.

Resolved that Councillor James be asked for the current position on the crossing at Llangiwg School.

9908. Planning: Councillor H Evans expressed an interest in P2015/0330 as he is a neighbor.

P2015/0330

Applicants Name: Mr Rhys Thomas, 6 Church Street, Pontardawe, Swansea, SA84JB.

Site Location: 11 Quarr Road, Pontardawe, Swansea, SA84JD.

Proposed Development: Demolition of existing rear extensions and garage and construction of Single storey rear extension plus raised decking and detached garage.

Resolved – Council was concerned over difficult access at the Jones Street entry to the Garage.

P2015/0318

Applicants Name: Mr Mitul Shah, 2nd Floor, Jebesen House, 53-61 High Street, Ruslip, Middlesex, HA4 7BD.

Site Location: Cwm Cartref Nursing Home, Commercial Road, Rhyd y Fro, Pontardawe, Swansea, SA84SS.

Proposed Development: Variation of condition 1 of Planning Permission P2010/0095 (Approved on the 13/5/2010 to allow a further 5 years for the commencement of development (Single Storey front extension and alterations to front, side and rear fenestration)

Resolved – No Objection.

9909. Policy and Resources Committee held on the 20th April 2015: This meeting to discuss the Consultation documents:

Exemptions to the Council Tax Premium on Long –Term Empty Homes in Wales:

- Question 1 – Should the six month exemption period be retained for unoccupied and substantially unfurnished dwellings – YES
- Question 2 – Do you think an exemption to the premium for properties undergoing major repair work is required – YES
- Question 3 – If so, is 18 months a reasonable length of time for major repair work or structural alteration to be completed and for the property to be brought back into use – YES
- Question 4 – Should these properties be given an exemption from the premium until 12 months after probate or letters of administration have been granted – YES
- Question 5 – Should Armed Forces personnel who own a property which is unoccupied and unfurnished be exempt from Council Tax premium on long term empty homes – NO
- Question 6 – Should there be an additional exemption from Council Tax premium for unoccupied and substantially unfurnished annexes which are treated as part of the main dwelling – YES

- Question 7 – Do you have any comments in relation to the application and administration of such an exemption – Not qualified to respond.
- Question 8 – Should owners of properties actively being marketed for sale or let be exempt from the Council Tax premium on long term empty homes – NO.
- Question 9 – Not applicable as answer to question 8 is NO.
- Question 10 – Do you think that an exemption from the premium for two years for properties being marketed for sale or let is a reasonable period to enable the owners to bring it back into use – YES (But no more than 2 years)
- Question 11 – Would it be more appropriate to provide guidance to Local Authorities on the application of this exemption rather than setting out its application in law – NO
- Question 12 – Are there any other exemptions to the Council Tax premium on long term empty homes that should be considered. – Not qualified to respond.
- Question 13 – Should any other existing exemptions to Council Tax be reviewed in light of the introduction of the premium – Review all.
- Question 14 – Do you have any comments in relation to the administration of the proposed exemptions – NO.
- Question 15 – Do you think guidance should cover these areas -YES
- Question 16 – Are there any other areas which should be covered in guidance for Local Authorities – Unknown.

Exemptions to the Council Tax Premium on Second Homes in Wales:

- Question 1 – Should class F properties be given exemption from the premium until 12 months after probate or letters for administration have been granted – YES
- Question 2 – Should furnished Annexes which are treated as part of the main dwelling be exempt from the Council Tax premium on second homes – YES
- Question 3 – Do you think the annexes which are let out as short stay accommodation should not be exempt from the premium – YES
- Question 4 – Do you have any comments in relation to the application and administration of such an exemption – Plain English should always be used.
- Question 5 – Should owners of properties actively being marketed for sale or let be exempt from Council Tax premium on second homes – NO
- Question 6 – Not applicable as replied NO to Question 5
- Question 7 – Do you think an exemption from the premium for two years for properties being marketed for sale or let is a reasonable period to enable the owners to bring them back into use – YES (No more than 2 years)
- Question 8 – Would it be more appropriate to provide guidance to Local Authorities on the application of this exemption rather than setting it out its application in legislation – NO
- Question 9 – Should owners of second homes whose main residence is a job related dwelling be exempt from Council Tax premium – NO.
- Question 10 – Not applicable as replied NO in question 9.
- Question 11 – Not applicable as replied NO in question 9.

- Question 12 – Do you think an additional exemption is required to ensure that Ministers of Religion who own a second home are exempt from the premium – NO
- Question 13 – Do you think an additional exemption is required that personnel residing in accommodation provided by the armed services and who own a second home area exempt from the premium – NO
- Question 14 - Do you think that the exemption from the premium for job related dwellings should only apply if the job related dwellings are in the UK – NO
- Question 15 – Should pitches occupied by caravans and moorings occupied by boats be exempt from Council Tax premium – YES
- Question 16 – Are there any types of seasonal homes (Class A) which you believe should be exempt from Council Tax premium ? If so how do you think they should be identified and defined in legislation? – ‘Temporary Accommodation for seasonal work’.
- Question 17 – Are there any other exemptions that the Council Tax Premium on second homes that should be considered – Not qualified to comment.
- Question 18 – Should any other existing exemptions to Council Tax be reviewed in light of the introduction of the premium – YES, ALL.
- Question 19 – Do you have any comments in relation to the administration of the proposed exemption? NO.
- Question 20 – Do you think the guidance should cover these areas – YES
- Question 21 – Are there any other areas which should be covered in guidance for Local Authorities – Plain English should be used at all times.

Resolved that the Committees recommendations will be ratified.

9910: Policy and Resources Committee held on the 20th April 2015 - Tax Devolution in Wales (Plenary Powers awarded):

The Committee reviewed the consultation in full prior to the meeting and had a number of issues:

- The consultation freely admitted that there may be possible alternatives that may be more efficient these were not included in the scope of the consultation.
- As the power is to be devolved after the Assembly General Election the new parliament may have totally different ideas
- To fully appreciate the consultation we would need to review the proposals for tax collection and management which is not due to be released until the summer of 2015.

The Committee believed that the consultation was premature, as there was legislation to be issued later in the year that would have a bearing on the consultation and also that a change in Government in 2017 may radically alter future plans in this area.

The Committee recommended that the above comments were submitted to the three consultations on behalf of Pontardawe Town Council.

Resolved that the Committees recommendations will be ratified.

9911. Finance Committee held on the 20th April 2015: This Committee to recommend on the awarding of grants for the 2015/16 fiscal year:

The Committee was advised that £6000 was available from the budget for the 2015/16 fiscal year.

The requests under review were as follows:

- **Alzheimer's Society** - Awarded £50.00
- **Marie Curie Nurses in Neath Port Talbot** – Awarded £50.00
- **Bobarth Children's Therapy Centre** – Awarded £50.00
- **Shelter Cymru** – Awarded £50.00
- **Teen Cancer Trust** – Awarded £50.00
- **The Stroke Association** – Awarded £50.00
- **Relate Cymru** – Awarded £50.00
- **NSPCC** - Awarded £50.00
- **Talking Books Wales**- Awarded £50.00
- **Urdd Gobaith Cymru** – Awarded £100.00
- **Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Cymru** – Awarded £100.00

The requests from regional groups were as follows:

- **Pontardawe Art Club** – The Club is based in Ynysmeudwy Hall and requested assistance to continue to organise the club together with the provision of demonstrations by professional artists. – Awarded £100.00
- **St Peters Flower Festival** – The festival is to be held at St Peters Church in August 2015 – Awarded £100.00
- **Heart of the Valley Show 2015** – Assistance in the provision of a park and ride service for the show - £350.00
- **Twinning Association of Pontardawe**- Assistance with Locmine twinning activities - Awarded £100.00
- **Welsh Area Fire Engine Restoration Society** - Awarded £50.00.
- **Cwmtawe Male Voice Choir** - Awarded £50.00.
- **Pontardawe Chamber of Commerce:** The Committee was advised that the Chamber of Commerce would like grant assistance of £2000 to assist with the Summerfest, in addition to the funds being provided by the Chamber of Commerce and the local publicans. The grant would be central to the provision of the street entertainment and parade – Awarded £2000.00. (The Town Council would however like the Chamber of Commerce to publicise the

Town Councils support in this event and to also provide a report to Council after the event as in previous years)

The following requests were also received but it was decided not to award grants:

- **St Peters Schoolroom restoration fund** – As the total cost of the restoration was over £750,000 the Town Council felt any grant would not provide sufficient funds for any meaningful action.
- **Riverside Centre Pontardawe** - No Application form, accounts or bank statements supplied.
- **Volunteers change lives** – The request for funding deadline was March 2015. There was also insufficient financial information or accounts available.
- **Me, Myself and I Club at Briton Ferry** – No Accounts or bank statement provided. The club was also situation outside the Town Council's area.

The grants given are in the interest of, and will bring direct benefit to, this area or any part of it, or all, or some of its inhabitants.

Resolved that the Committees recommendations will be ratified.

9912. Annual Return 2014/15: Council reviewed the Annual Return for 2014/15 and agreed its contents.

Resolved that the Mayor sign the Annual Return on behalf of Council.

9913. Clerks Report on Insurance Provision 2015/16: The Clerk confirmed that she had been in discussion with the insurance brokers to identify both the most cost effective insurance provision for 2015/16 and to identify additional cover that was necessary following the Town Councils Financial Risk Assessment and its decision to transfer to Electronic Banking Facilities.

Council was advised that RSA was prepared to offer standard cover for £5050.81 which was slightly less than the cost of the provision for 2014/15 however in addition to the usual cover they would add cover for Third Party Computer and Funds Transfer Fraud and increase the Fidelity cover at no extra cost.

They also offered a reduced premium for a longer term agreement.

It was also suggested that additional cover be obtained to cover against Computer Virus and reinstatement of data.

The Clerk also suggested that the Markel insurance cover currently in place to cover Executive and Professional Liability for Officers also be added for Hall Committees to cover decisions made by them on Council's behalf as the cost per hall was minimal (approx £200 each)

Resolved that the single year standard invite with enhancements from RSA be accepted for 2015/16 with additional cover from Markel to cover both Executive decisions by the Clerk and Hall Committees.

9914. Clerks Report –Ynysmeudwy Hall: Council was advised that at present there was no Management Committee operating in Ynysmeudwy Hall. Funds were therefore accumulating in the Hall's Bank Account.

The Clerk suggested that as the lights at Ynysmeudwy Hall were very old and that spares were difficult to come by, we consider replacing the lights with the costs being borne by the funds held in the Ynysmeudwy Hall Account.

Resolved that the lights at the hall will be replaced with funds held in the Ynysmeudwy Hall Account.

9915. Access to information –Community and Town Councils: The Clerk confirmed that statutory guidance had been received with regard to the above. Action that would need to be taken was as follows:

- Councillors Party affiliation would need to be displayed on the web site
- Community wards would need to be displayed on the web site
- The web site would need to indicate if Councillors were elected or Co-opted.
- The 'Register of Members Interests' would need to be published electronically

The Clerk confirmed that on the instructions of Neath Port Talbot Council Legal Services, the Town Council had not held a Register of Members Interests (although in each meeting Members disclosed personal and preferential Interests and details were kept of these interests at the Town Council's Office. Details were also included in the published minutes) however it seemed that the Town Council would need in future to both keep a register and publish this information. We were however awaiting a template from 'One Voice Wales' to set up the register.

Resolved that the Clerk will take action to update the web site with the required information however Council does believe that it is prudent to await a template prior to setting up the Register.

9916. Internal Independent Auditors Report 2014/15: The Clerk confirmed that the Internal Independent Audit had been carried out and the Auditors Report received. The Report concluded that in all significant respects the control objectives as shown on the Audit Form 1 to 5 and 7 to 10 were being achieved throughout the financial year to a standard adequate to meet the needs of the Council.

The Town Council thanked the Clerk who was also the Responsible Financial Officer for her work in maintaining good financial standards throughout the year.

Resolved that Council will accept the Internal Auditors Report.

9917. Accounts Schedule 311:

Resolved to accept the schedule 311 totaling £8745.47 in line with Standing Orders together with the Bank Reconciliation for the year ended 30th March 2015.

9918. Email received re Autogloss Building, Pontardawe: A request was made for enquiries into the future of the Autogloss building which had suffered substantial fire damage but was not secured effectively and may cause a danger to individuals. Councillor Purcell explained that there were some difficulties with this property as the owners were located in Ireland.

Resolved that the Clerk contact Neath Port Talbot Council to determine the current position.

9919. Email from Celtic Leisure re Christmas 2015: The Clerk was happy to advise Council that Celtic Leisure had agreed to sponsor the Town Christmas Tree for the Christmas of 2015. Celtic Leisure would however like to put up a banner giving details of its sponsorship and would also like this added to any press release or literature.

Resolved that Celtic Leisure's sponsorship will be agreed with thanks and their request for publicity will be acted upon.

9920. Email received from St Peters Church: Councillors A Nicholson and Ms S Northcott expressed an interest. Council was advised that a response to a request for St Peters Church to fix a Memorial to the wall in the Church had been received, unfortunately due to insurance concerns no further wall fixtures would be sanctioned.

Resolved to be noted.

9921. Letter received from the Ombudsman: Council was advised that a letter had been received from the Ombudsman advising Town and Community Councils of revised guidance on the Code of Conduct. Information was available from their web site.

Resolved to be noted.

9922. Email received from the Swansea Valley Canal Society: The Clerk advised Council that the Swansea Valley Canal Society had been nominated for an award due to the work they undertaken at the Canal for restoration and community engagement. Council was very pleased that all the volunteers' hard work had been rewarded.

Resolved to be noted.

9923. Letter received from Clive Reed re Swansea Valley Heritage: Councillors A Nicholson, Ms S Northcott, H Evans, Mrs L Purcell and B Williams declared an interest as Mr Reed is a personal friend, and took no part in the decision.

Council was advised that Mr Reed was in the process of researching and writing a book that dealt with the lives of families living and working in the Swansea Valley during the height of its industrial era. It was to be the first book to be published solely on a coalmine in the Swansea Valley and he would be grateful for a grant towards his work.

Council felt that the project would produce an important historical document detailing the lives of the people in the Swansea Valley which should be supported.

Resolved to award a grant of £200.

9924. Urgent Road Safety Matters: Councillor Purcell commented on the issue with signage at the Cross in Pontardawe and stated that she would look into matters.

Resolved to be noted.

9925. Date and time of next meeting: The date of the next Ordinary Meeting of Council will be Monday 8th June 2015 at Ynysmeudwy Hall commencing at 6.45pm.

Signed **Dated**