

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF PORTSKEWETT COMMUNITY COUNCIL

HELD VIA REMOTE ACCESS

TUESDAY 19th MAY 2020

Councillors present: Mr P Nurcombe (Chair)
Mr C Archer
Mrs C Carne
Miss L Dymock
Mr S Essery
Mr P Fox
Mr A Griffiths
Mr G Parker
Mr I Standing

1. **PUBLIC MEETING**

Due to the Government restrictions in respect of COVID19 the meeting was held by remote access and it was not practical for members of the public to participate.
No issues had been raised with the clerk by members of the public prior to the meeting.

2. **SIGN THE ATTENDANCE BOOK**

Due to the remote nature of the meeting it was not possible to sign the Attendance Book.

3. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies had been received from Cllr Fawcitt and Cllr Howells.

4. **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

There were no interests to declare.

5. **MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

It was proposed by Cllr Carne, seconded by Cllr Parker and agreed by all present that the minutes of the last meeting were accepted as a true record. The Chairman will sign the minutes at the earliest opportunity.

Action PN

6. **CLERK'S REPORT**

The clerk's report for May had been circulated prior to the meeting for the councillor's consideration. The report was accepted by the meeting and the Chairman will sign the report at the earliest opportunity.

Action PN

7. **REPORT FROM REPRESENTATIVE ON ARW SCHOOL AND OTHER BODIES**

- a. Due to Government restrictions in respect of COVID19 the governing body of ARW School had not met, and there had been no meetings of other bodies.

8. **DISCUSSION WITH COUNTY COUNCILLOR**

The County Cllr reported that Monmouthshire County Council had been concentrating on the issues arising as a consequence of COVID19. The Council is now out of emergency mode and in recovery mode. The PPE issues which existed at the start of the pandemic are now resolved. The emphasis has moved towards building up on community testing and tracking.

There are 240 MCC staff currently furloughed, most staff are working from home. MCC buildings have not yet re-opened. The Aneurin Bevan Health Authority are has moved past the peak of it's cases.

Waste collections are returning to normal, with Five Lanes and Llanfoist recycling centres opening w/c 25th May 2020. Residents will need to book an appointment at the site, and the police will also be on site.

Wales Government will be re-assessing the lockdown position on 28th May 2020.

Chairman's signature

Schools may open in June to some years groups, the big issue will be school transport. MCC will need to facilitate a summer care scheme for children of key workers.

The County Cllr thanked all volunteers for their commitment and hard work during the lockdown period, and thanked Cllr Dymock for her work both in her co-ordinating role and as a volunteer.

9. **NEW CORRESPONDENCE**

a. **Renewal of Council Insurance**

The clerk had informed the insurance company that two new pieces of play equipment had been acquired. The renewal cost was £1,095.86, an increase of £325.23 on the previous year. The clerk reminded members that the Council had entered a three year long term agreement which was due to end on 31st May 2021. The budget for 2020/21 was agreed at £800 based on 2019/20 costs.

Cllr Archer proposed that a reduction to the premium be requested as playparks are currently not accessible to the public as a result of COVID19 restrictions.

It was proposed by Cllr Griffiths, seconded by Cllr Nurcombe and agreed by all present that the policy be renewed once the position re a reduction has been clarified, and that a budget virement be made from the unidentified services contingency budget to cover the shortfall. **Action BY**

b. **Ground Maintenance Services**

A letter had been received expressing an interest in providing grounds maintenance services. The information was duly noted, the clerk was asked to retain the information for future consideration. **Action BY**

c. **Planning Application DM/2020/00521**

The consultation letter had been withdrawn by MCC and will be reissued at a later date.

d. **Planning compliance at the Old Shipyard development site**

Cllr Archer informed the meeting that residents continued to express concerns regarding lorries accessing the site. Lorries continued to drive at speed and more cars had been damaged as a result.

Plans for the site show an access route, of a vehicle width, to the slipway. This has been narrowed by a house being partially built on the access area. Cllr Parker reported that the Pumping Station are looking this themselves, as they require access to an outlet off the slipway, and are taking legal advice.

Planning consent provided for the installation of a bat box which has not yet been carried out, and otters have been seen in the area which needs to be taken account of.

Cllr Fox had received a number of direct complaints, enforcement officers had visited the site already but will be going again to check compliance.

The container outside the development had been removed, however there is still a caravan outside the site.

e. **Grass Cutting Stowball Common and Harold's Field**

It was proposed by Cllr Parker, seconded by Cllr Griffiths and agreed by all present that MM Garden Services should be asked to cut a track around Stowball Common and all of Harold's Field. **Action BY**

Planning Applications Approved by Monmouthshire County Council

00453	The Old School House, 10 Main Road, Portskewett	Non-material amendment to planning consent DC/2014/00702 - Reduction in size, change to layout and position of doors and windows.
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Planning Applications Refused by Monmouthshire County Council

No planning applications have been refused by Monmouthshire County Council this month.

10. **FINANCE**

a. **Pink Paper April**

The pink paper for April was circulated prior to the meeting for councillor's information. The Chairman and Vice Chairman had authorised the payments in April, in the absence of a council meeting.

It was proposed by Cllr Nurcombe, seconded by Cllr Carne and agreed by all present that the payments be accepted. The Chairman will sign the pink paper at the earliest opportunity. **Action PN**

b. Minimum Wage Rate

The clerk informed members that the Minimum Wage Rate for 2020/21 had been agreed at £8.72, an increase of 5p per hour. This would result in an overspend of £31.20.

It was proposed by Cllr Nurcombe, seconded by Cllr Parker and agreed by all present that the new rate be adopted. **Action BY**

c. Grant Application St Mary's Church, Portskewett

An application had been received requesting a grant of £500 for maintenance of the churchyard. The Council had reinstated a budget of £250. The clerk reminded members of the advice from NALC regarding payments to churches for grounds maintenance.

It was proposed by Cllr Nurcombe, seconded by Councillor Carne and agreed by all present that a grant of £250 be awarded. **Action BY**

d. Regular Monthly Payments

The clerk had circulated payments schedules in respect of payroll and hire of hall for meetings for approval. The payroll schedule was in accordance with employee contracts, and the hire of hall with the agreement approved in January 2020 with ARW School.

It was proposed by Cllr Griffiths, seconded by Cllr Carne and agreed by all present that the payment schedules be approved. **Action BY**

e. Pink Paper May

The pink paper for May was circulated prior to the meeting for the councillors' consideration and was duly authorised by the Chairman.

The following payments were proposed by Cllr Griffiths, seconded by Cllr Carne and agreed by all members present.

Salaries	£1,190.92
Torfaen CBC – Pension contributions	£ 219.11
HMRC – NIC and PAYE	£ 101.30
Came and Company (Insurance Renewal 2020/21)	£1,095.86
St Mary's Church (Grant 2020/21 Grounds Maintenance)	£ 250.00

The clerk was asked to hold back payment to Came and Company until the position re a reduction had been clarified. **Action BY**

f. Budget Monitoring Report for the 12 months to 31st March 2020

The report had been circulated to members prior to the meeting for their consideration. Members had no questions for the clerk. The report was duly accepted by the meeting.

g. Renewal of SLCC Membership

The renewal notice had been received in respect of 2020/21 membership, the cost of which was £140.

It was proposed by Cllr Nurcombe, seconded by Cllr Parker and agreed by all present that the renewal be retrospectively approved. **Action BY**

h. Quarterly Report on Bank Reconciliations

Due to Government restrictions in respect of COVID19 it had not been possible to carry out the quarterly check. Item deferred. **Action IS & BY**

i. Renewal of Anti-Virus Software

The Norton Subscription will cease on 31st May 2020. A new subscription from John Lewis would cost £14.99 plus £3.50 delivery.

It was proposed by Cllr Carne, seconded by Cllr Archer and agreed by all present that the Norton Subscription should be renewed. **Action BY**

11. **DELEGATED POWERS**

It was agreed that meetings would be held by remote access using Zoom until Government restrictions were lifted to allow normal meetings to recommence. Councillor Dymock arranged an initial 3 month subscription to Zoom, to allow for the required meeting length, the cost being £43.16 per month.

It was proposed by Cllr Archer, seconded by Cllr Nurcombe and agreed by all present that a laptop should be acquired as the clerk could not facilitate remote meetings using the current equipment available. It would also be of benefit for other Council use in the longer term. Councillor Archer will look at potential options. **Action CA**

It was proposed by Cllr Nurcombe, seconded by Cllr Archer and agreed by all present that whilst the Government restrictions are in place in respect of COVID19 the Chair, Vice Chair and any two other councillors would have the delegated authority to make decisions on any matters arising, and to authorise payments, which could not wait until the next council meeting.

12. **WEBSITE ACCESSIBILITY REGULATIONS**

a. **Fizzyblocks**

Subsequent to the initial meeting where a verbal estimate of £1,200 had been given no further information had been received due to the disruption as a result of COVID19.

Hugo Fox

The clerk contacted Hugo Fox who have experience of developing local council websites. The following information was provided by telephone call:

There are three levels of packages:

- i. Bronze is free, a council downloads the package and sets up the website themselves.
- ii. Silver costs £19.99 per month and the Council receives online support and training.
- iii. Gold costs £29.99 per month which includes a higher level of support and training.

If Hugo Fox build the website the cost would be £399, and they estimate a week to build it.

Their package is currently 80% compliant but will be 100% compliant before September.

Vikatec

The clerk also contacted Vikatec, who currently provide the hosting service to the council. No response had been received.

It was proposed by Cllr Archer, seconded by Cllr Dymock and agreed by all present that the clerk should inform Hugo Fox of the council's intent to ask them to develop a new website for the council, and asking them to provide written confirmation of the relevant information. **Action BY**

13. **PLACE PLAN**

- a. Deferred until next meeting. The clerk was asked to contact the other local councils to ensure this was on their agenda for consideration. **Action BY**

14. **DEFIBRILLATOR TRAINING AND AQUISITION**

- a. The training had to be cancelled due to the Government restrictions in respect of COVID19. The clerk was asked to agenda this for the July meeting. **Action BY**

- b. The online application for help with funding from the British Heart Foundation had closed, but was due to re-open in May. It has not yet done so. **Action BY**

15. **REPLACEMENT LDP**

Deferred until new consultation date notified by MCC.

16. **VILLAGE BONFIRE EVENT**

Due to the longer term implications of the COVID19 pandemic members agreed that it would not be possible to hold the event in 2020.

17. **ANNUAL ACCOUNTS**

- a. The audited annual accounts had been circulated to members prior to the meeting for their consideration.

It was proposed by Cllr Carne, seconded by Cllr Archer and agreed by all present that the accounts be accepted and approved. The Chairman will sign the accounts at the earliest opportunity. **Action PN**

- b. The Internal Audit report had been circulated to members prior to the meeting for their consideration.

It was proposed by Cllr Griffiths, seconded by Cllr Parker and agreed by all present that the report be accepted.

- c. The Annual Governance Statement had been circulated to members prior to the meeting for their consideration. The clerk duly completed the report with members' responses during the meeting.

- d. The Annual Return had been circulated to members prior to the meeting for their consideration.

It was proposed by Cllr Dymock, seconded by Cllr Carne and agreed by all present that the Annual return be approved.

The Chairman will sign the Annual Return, and associated documents required by the External Auditors at the earliest opportunity. The clerk will then send the Annual Return and associated documents to the external auditors.

Action PN & BY

- e. It was proposed by Cllr Nurcombe, seconded by Cllr Dymock and agreed by all present that the following members would constitute the Audit Committee:

Cllr Nurcombe, Cllr Fawcitt, Cllr Carne and Cllr Dymock.

It was agreed that due to the Government restrictions in respect of COVID19 the committee would hold a remote meeting once the council had acquired a laptop.

18. **ADOPTION OF COUNCILLOR'S ALLOWANCES 2020/21**

A briefing paper on Councillor's Allowances had been circulated to members prior to the meeting for their consideration.

It was proposed by Cllr Archer, seconded by Cllr Parker and agreed by all present that the council would not adopt any of the non-mandated allowances for 2020/21.

The clerk reminded members that if they did not wish to claim a mandated allowance to which they were entitled they needed to inform her in writing.

Action ALL

19. **BEST KEPT GARDEN COMPETITION**

Due to Government restrictions in respect of COVID19 members felt it would not be possible to undertake the usual competition this year.

The clerk suggested that as an alternative, rather than have no competition this year, that people could submit a photograph of their garden, with a narrative about it.

It was proposed by Cllr Nurcombe, seconded by Cllr Archer and agreed by all present that a small working group, made up of Cllr Dymock, Cllr Archer and Cllr Griffiths would draw up a plan for the competition to go ahead in this way.

Action LD, CA & AG

20. **ITEMS OF LOCAL CONCERN (FOR INFORMATION ONLY)**

Local Places for Nature Package

One Voice Wales had supplied information on a new scheme, Local Places for Nature, where councils could apply for a package to establish a nature area within their community. Members felt that given the requirements that had to be met as a condition of being allocated a package, it was not practical to apply at the current time.

Village Planters

Members agreed that whilst the current Government restrictions were in place it was not possible to maintain the village planters. The situation would be reviewed when restrictions are lifted.

Dynham Line

Concerns have been raised that a resident has been using the Dynham line as a rear access to their property. Cllr Fox confirmed that MCC has acquired the Dynham line and have asked the Ministry of Defence to confirm whether they granted access to a resident over the land.

Monthly Police Report

Notification had been received that the police report for May will be combined with June due to technical difficulties.

Gwent Young Farmers

A request for financial assistance had been received from Gwent Young farmers. The clerk was asked to supply them with a grant application form which they would need to submit.

Tenovus

A request for financial assistance had been received from Tenovus. It was duly noted.

Electoral Review

Notification had been received that consultation would commence on 1st June 2020 for a period of 3 weeks. The clerk informed members that due to current Government restrictions in respect of COVID19, many Councils had questioned the viability of the consultation at the current time. No response had been received.

21. **DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending, and Cllr Dymock for hosting the meeting, and gave the date and time of the next meeting as **Tuesday 16th June, to be held remotely**. The meeting was then declared closed at 9.12pm.