

SHIRENEWTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Minutes of the Council meeting held on Friday 15th May 2020 at 7.00 pm
by remote attendance due to the COVID-19 pandemic

Present:

Councillors: Mr P Butterworth (Chair), Mr I Martin, Mrs J Smith-Haddon, County Councillor L Brown, Mrs J McKenna.

Also in attendance:

Mrs H Counsell (Clerk to the Council)

The Chair welcomed all to the first virtual Council meeting and thanked them for their attendance. He acknowledged that the meetings planned for the 6th April and the Annual Meeting on 4th May had been cancelled due to the current pandemic which resulted in government restrictions on attendance at meetings. He explained that it was unfortunate that the public was unable to be involved in this meeting via Microsoft Teams, but notices had been posted early with the request that residents raise any issues with the Clerk beforehand. The Welsh Government was not recommending the use of Zoom because of security issues. Therefore future meetings would be held on their usual monthly date and, if possible they would be open to the public, but if restrictions are not lifted they will be by remote attendance of Council members, with the public encouraged to raise any issues with the Clerk. The Annual Meeting will be held later in the year when restrictions are lifted and Council meetings are again open to the public. The Chair confirmed that he is willing to remain the Chair until that time. Council members were in agreement and thanked him for the offer.

1. Apologies for absence were received and accepted from:

Councillors K Morton and J Grose.

2. Issues raised by members of the public.

There were none.

3. To consider applications for two co-opted vacancies in the Shirenewton ward and one vacancy in the Earlswood ward.

No applications had been received.

4. To receive the monthly police report.

17/4/2020 – Report of off road bikes in Wentwood Forest.

18/4/2020 – Report of a Red ATV quad bike stolen overnight from a locked container at a property in Earlswood. Two padlocks were forced off to gain entry.

20/4/2020 – report of suspicious activity in the early hours of the morning at a property in Earlswood. Persons were using a torch in a nearby field. Officers attended and the police helicopter attended too and a wide search was made of the area with a negative result. No offences committed at that time.

30/4/2020 – Report of vehicles congregating in Shirenewton village hall car park. Officers attended but vehicles had left prior.

3/5/2020 – Report of two off road bikes in Wentwood Forest.

The police had been contacted to ask under what circumstances the police helicopter is used.

Minute 3954 - To disclose personal and pecuniary interests in listed business.

County Cllr L Brown took no part in the discussion or voting on the planning application as she is a member of Mon CC's Planning Committee.

Minute 3955- To confirm and sign minutes of the meeting held on 3rd March 2020.

Due to the cancellation of the April meeting these minutes were confirmed as a true record by e-mail response and duly signed by the Chair on 30.4.20.

Minute 3956 - To consider planning matters.**1. DM/2020/00268 Grove View, Earlswood**

Outdoor menage for horse riding, area as outlined on attached maps/plans.

Council considered and approved this retrospective application subject to the following conditions:

1. No external lighting without further planning approval;
 2. No business/commercial use without further planning approval;
 3. Land, including access, to be restored to pasture/agricultural upon disuse as menage.
- (Voting: 4 for/1 abstention).

Minute 3957 – Finance. To approve the payment of items from 23.3.20.

Expenditure (by Standing Order)

Clerk's salary/allowances -	March 2020	£654.20
Clerk's Pension (Council & Clerk's contribution) -	March 2020	£177.95

Clerk's salary/allowances -	April 2020	£659.20
Clerk's Pension (Council & Clerk's contribution) -	April 2020	£236.95

(Includes £58.33 towards £700 pa LGPS pension deficit)

Payments

Payee	Reason for expenditure	Amount £	Vat £	Total
Mrs H Counsell	Expenses - March	56.20		56.20
GRW Services, Earlswood Invoice 0383	Supply of handrail at Funeral Path	145.00	29.00	174.00
Merlin Waste Invoice 4041	Bin emptying - March	37.50		37.50
SLCC	Annual subscription	140.00		140.00
SLCC Enterprises	Wales Training Seminar (Clerk) Sept 2020	75.00	15.00	90.00
Merlin Waste Invoice 4080	Bin emptying - April	37.50		37.50
Mrs H Counsell	Expenses - April	63.35		63.35
Mon CC Inv: 70160047	Refurbishment and painting of playhouse	810.00	162.00	972.00

Council approved all payments as listed.

Minute 3958 – To receive a list of items to be considered for approval.

1. Council reluctantly accepted the resignation of Cllr Bryn Price from 31.3.20. Democratic Services had been informed. Clerk had sent a letter of thanks to Mrs Price for her service to the local community. Mon CC to produce advertisement in due course.
2. Council resolved to accept the agreement with the LGPS Pension Fund. – In 2015 the employers pension contribution was lowered from 27.6% to 21.1% to correspond with Mon CC staff, by agreement with the then Chair of SCC and Head of Finance at Mon CC. SCC did not realise this would cause a pension deficit which had now grown to £9,000. The Pension Fund requested payment at £3,000 for three years from 2020/21. Following e-mail discussion between the SCC Chair, Pensions Manager and Head of Finance at Mon CC, and realising that this could cause hardship to the community council by using up a third of current reserves, it was agreed on 16.3.20 (final date for responding was 19.3.20) that for the next three years SCC pays 18.2% primary pension plus £700 deficit, with SCC agreeing that if the current Clerk were to retire then the new appointee would join the Local Government Pension Scheme as a condition of appointment, also that after the coronavirus pandemic restrictions are lifted there will be further discussions on the way forward. Clerk to contact Mr I Moore.
3. Council approved the cancellation of April and May meetings (including AGM) due to the coronavirus outbreak. Information was posted on the website, Facebook and in noticeboards on 24.3.20. It was further agreed that the Annual Meeting be held later in the year when meeting restrictions are lifted and public meetings resumed.
4. Approval was given for the cancellation of VE Day 75 celebrations on 8 May 2020 and Keep Wales Tidy litter pick planned for April 2020, due to the outbreak.
5. Approval of the closure of the play area on 24.3.20 was given. Council noted that closure notices had been displayed by Mon CC on all outside play/gym equipment in the County. Last safety check made by Clerk on 24.3.20, gate locked, notices posted on boards and good supply of dog waste bags in telephone kiosk as all unnecessary travel banned. Hall car park closed on 30.3.20 on the instruction of Chepstow police. On 7.5.20 permission given to J Wassal, Mon CC to undertake agreed painting and repairs to play area while it is closed to the public. This was undertaken week commencing 11.5.20.
6. Council resolved to financially assist MESH (Mynyddbach, Earlswood and Shirenewton help), local voluntary organisation providing services to isolated and vulnerable residents in the community, with up to £100 on the production of receipts for necessary purchases.
7. Permission given to the Clerk and Cllr Smith-Haddon for the planting up of flower troughs through Shirenewton when lockdown restrictions are eased.

Minute 3959 – To consider and approve annual audit requirements:

Council approved the appointment of the Internal Auditor and resolved to increase his annual fee to £100 for his nominated charity.

The Governance Statement and Financial Investment Strategy were approved.

The Internal Audit Report was approved and the recommendation noted.

Approval was given to Sections I and 2 of the Annual Return of external auditors (form to be countersigned by the Chair). Council noted that no external audit action plan had been required for the 2017/18 audit.

Further information from the Clerk

Council noted that the annual invoice for £1000 Community Benefit for 2019/20 had been

sent to the current owners, Low Carbon Ltd, London. Response received to advise that the RPI index should have been applied to previous invoices – invoice updated on 11.5.20 to £1100.72 plus £104.91 backdated payment = total of £1205.63.

It was noted that the Earlswood field Annual Agreement had been signed and returned by the tenant on 17.4.20 along with the payment.

The Clerk reported that the Mobile Post Office was on hold until restrictions lifted, and that no mobile service was in operation during the current lockdown.

Minute 3959 – Items of local concern

- It was reported that a Planning Officer had attended the site of a gateway being enlarged at the junction of the B4235 and Weyloed Lane, Mynyddbach and advised the landowner that planning permission was required.
- Footpath 167 at West End – a complaint had been made regarding bikes using this footpath and a sign had been erected saying 'No Motorbikes'. Another resident was unhappy with this signage. Clerk to check status of footpath with Footpaths Officer at Mon CC.

Minute 3960 - To receive correspondence as per attached schedule.

Council noted receipt of the following correspondence:

Covid 19 arrangements during lockdown - Various information, amended regulations and guidelines on holding virtual meetings, finance and governance during the coronavirus outbreak from the Welsh Government, Wales Audit Office, One Voice Wales and departments of Mon CC.

Welsh Government

- 11.5.20 - Information regarding the Welsh Government's Land Release Fund 2020/21 from Rebecca Evans AM, Minister for Finance and Trefnydd.
- Notification from the Boundary Commission of consultation on the Electoral Review in Monmouthshire commencing on 1st June 2020 for three weeks, and that maps would be posted out to Clerks in the near future. Several Councils have objected to the consultation taking place while the pandemic restrictions remain in place making it difficult for Councillors to meet to study the maps. It has been requested that consultations are delayed until restrictions lifted, and digital maps requested in order to circulate to council members.

WG Consultations

- Clean Air Plan for Wales.
- Independent special post-16 institutions (ISPI's).
- Welsh Language Standards for Healthcare Regulators and the Professional Standards Authority.
- Air Quality and Soundscape: review of TAN11.
- Legislative proposals for religion, values and ethics.

Minute 3961 - Date of next meeting Monday 1st June 2020 at 7.00pm at the Recreation Hall, Shirenewton if the lockdown is lifted, if not, the meeting will be by Councillors remote attendance.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.15 pm.