**NANTYGLO & BLAINA TOWN COUNCIL**

**CYNGOR TREF NANT-Y-GLO A BLAENAU**

**Mrs T Hughes - Town Clerk/RFO**

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**Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held remotely at 2.00pm on Tuesday 8th February 2022**

**A meeting to which members of the public were entitled to attend.**

Present: Councillor G Morvan, Chair, Finance & General Purposes Committee, presiding.

 Councillors K Jones JP; D Hillman; C Hillman; L Harris; M Williams and K Jenkins

In attendance: Mrs T Hughes, Town Clerk / RFO

Prior to the start of the meeting the Town Clerk informed that no members of the press or public were in attendance. **Resolved** to note the information received.

**Declaration of Interest**

Members were invited to declare matters of interest either at the beginning or at any time during the proceedings. Members were reminded that all declarations must be recorded in the book provided. **Resolved** to note that Councillors D & C Hillman declared a non-pecuniary interest in item number 2b.

**1. Apologies for absence:**

Members were invited to consider the apologies for absence and to formally resolve to accept. **Resolved** to note that apologies were received from the Assistant Officer, Mrs N Horner.

**Further Resolved** to accept the apologies received.

**2. Correspondence:**

Members were invited to consider the listed correspondence, plus with the Chairman’s permission, any urgent information that might be received prior to the date of the meeting.

a) One Voice Wales – (for information*)*

i E-mail re: Raising awareness / promotional videos – Community & Town Councillors.

The Chair suggested that Members could share the link with others who may be interested in becoming a Town Councillor.

**Resolved** to note the information received.

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*Councillors D & C Hillman declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 2b.*

b) Aneurin Bevan Community Health Council – *(for information):*

 Notice re: Planning Meetings of ABCHC to take place on 8th February 2022 via Teams.

**Resolved** to note the information received.

c) Councillor L Emanuel *(for information):*

Letter informing of Councillor Emanuel’s resignation as a Town Councillor for the Blaina Ward.

Members commented that it was a shame to have received Councillor Emanuel’s resignation although it was understood that she had been experiencing health issues and that she was also awaiting to attend meetings in person not remotely.

The Town Clerk informed that due to the Local Elections taking place in May 2022, there was no requirement to action the vacancy procedure, although the Returning Officer at Blaenau Gwent CBC had been notified. The Town Clerk also informed that a letter of thanks had been sent to Mrs Emanuel.

**Resolved** to note the information received.

d) Councillor K Rowland *(for information):*

E-mail and letter informing of Councillor Rowland’s resignation as a Town Councillor for the Blaina Ward.

The Chair informed that he was shocked to have received Councillor Rowland’s letter of resignation. Both he and the Town Clerk had spoken to Councillor Rowland to inform him of a number of options that would have been available. Councillor Rowland had stated that he was still passionate about serving his local area and that he had enjoyed his time with the Town Council but his personal circumstances meant that he was unable to continue as a Town Councillor for the foreseeable future.

Members agreed that Councillor Rowland’s resignation was a sad loss as he had a lot to offer as a Town Councillor. It was stated that a carers allowance was available if Councillor Rowland had wanted to claim.

The Town Clerk informed that due to the Local Elections taking place in May 2022, there was no requirement to action the vacancy procedure, although the Returning Officer at Blaenau Gwent CBC had been notified. The Town Clerk also informed that a letter of thanks had been sent to Mr Rowland.

**Resolved** to note the information received.

e) SSE Business Energy *(for information):*

Letter informing of the current SSE Business Energy contract in respect of Salem Chapel was due to expire on 28th February 2022. Members were invited to consider SSE’s proposed offer.

The Town Clerk informed that a price comparison search had been carried out and the cheapest offer was a 2 year fixed price with British Gas Lite payable via direct debit. The Town Clerk informed that there were no legislative or practical reasons not to pay by direct

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debit.

A member informed that he had recently been informed that SSE had tripled renewal prices in some instances and that they had been very difficult to deal with (a Page 2separate issue to Salem Chapel).

**Resolved** to switch electricity account (Salem Chapel) from SSE to British Gas Lite with the terms as detailed above.

f) Gwent Public Services Board*:*

Members considered the Upper Ebbw Fach well-being assessment document and the following comments were made:

* Page 2 – the description of the area was thought to be confusing regarding ward members and with the omission of Duffryn Park. Lakeside Retail Park (including Asda) was in Nantyglo not Brynmawr.
* Page 5 – there were 4 electric vehicle charging points.
* Page 6 – there was no accident and emergency facility at Nevill Hall hospital. Blaina library was omitted. The statement of 2 electric vehicle charging points contradicted the information stated on page 5.
* Page 10 – Banna Park, Nantyglo was omitted as were some allotments.
* Page 12 – many species were omitted.
* Page 15 – should read ‘miners’ and that the building was paid for by the miners. Other services were omitted.

Members concluded that the report was lacking in some details and contained many errors.

**Resolved** that the Town Clerk write to the author(s) of the report regarding the omissions and inaccurate information contained within.

*Additional correspondence received with permission of the Chair:*

g) Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council *(for information):*

E-mail informing of candidate and agents briefings to take place (via MS Teams) in respect of the forthcoming County Borough and Community Elections to be held in May 2022.

**Resolved** to note the information received.

**3. S.137 donations (Local Government Act 1972 & Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015:**

As previously resolved, Members were invited to consider making further financial donations to Blaenau Gwent Foodbank to assist residents of Nantyglo and Blaina for the month of February 2022.

The Town Clerk informed that despite another letter and e-mail sent to the manager of Blaenau Gwent Foodbank, no response had been received.

Members commented that Blaenau Gwent Foodbank needed to be professional and

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accountable. In response to a suggestion, it was commented that the residents of Nantyglo and Blaina would suffer if the Town Council resolved not to make any further donations to the Foodbank.

The Town Clerk informed that she had communicated very successfully with the manager of the Foodbank until relatively recently and he had confirmed that the donations made by the Town Council would be used to benefit residents of Nantyglo and Blaina. Members agreed that it was important to know that the donations made by the Town Council were being utilised in the correct manner.

**Resolved** that the Town Clerk investigate for another contact name and details in respect of Blaenau Gwent Foodbank. **Further Resolved** that a donation of £200 be made to Blaenau Gwent Foodbank for the month of February 2022.

**4. Review of Grant Policy and Application Form 2022/23:**

Members were invited to review and if appropriate resolve the Grant Policy and application form for 2022/23*.*

The Town Clerk informed that no changes had been made to the policy for consideration but that the appropriate dates would be amended.

Councillor D Hillman thanked members of the Task and Finish Group for their previous work in reviewing this document.

**Resolved** that the policy and application form remain the same for 2022/23.

**5. Application to the Community Grant Fund:**

Members were invited to consider the listed application(s), plus with the Chairman’s permission any additional applications that might be received prior to the date of the meeting. Members were also reminded that applications would need to be considered in conjunction with the current policy.

a) *None received to date*.

 **Resolved** accordingly.

**6. Salem Chapel:**

 Members were invited to consider the attached inspection report:

* January 2022:

Questions/queries were invited:

It was reported that the alarm had been recently reported as sounding again although it was thought that this might have been due to rodents. The Chair informed that he had spoken to Mr R Dunham (contractor) to request that an appropriate rat poison be put down within the chapel.

The Town Clerk informed that the alarm engineer had inspected the Chapel and that the sensor that had been activated over the November/December 2021 period had been appropriately desensitised.

**Resolved** to note the information received and **Further Resolved** that the report be approved.

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**7. Confidential Information:**

 The following item(s) might contain information that was of a confidential or personal nature and was therefore exclusive to Members of the Town Council only. (Public Bodies Admission to Meetings Act 1960). **Resolved** to support the motion.

a) Precept, Income and Expenditure Report:

Members were invited to consider, and if appropriate approve the Precept, Income and Expenditure Report for:

* January 2022:

Questions/queries were invited:

Q: What was the payment to British Gas Lite in respect of?

A: Gas (standing charge) at Salem Chapel.

**Resolved** that the report be approved.

b) Update re: Liaison Meeting with Blaenau Gwent CBC – Revenue Budget 2022/23:

An update was provided in respect of the recent Liaison Meeting with Blaenau Gwent CBC in respect of the Revenue Budget for the financial year 2022/23.

*Councillor M Williams left the meeting at this juncture.*

Councillor K Jones JP thanked Councillor G Morvan for attending the liaison meeting in his absence.

Councillor D Hillman summarised the main point discussed at the meeting:

2.6 – The positive settlement for Blaenau Gwent CBC was highlighted.

2.9 – The three transfers into the settlement were stated as: £13.3m gate fees grant; £0.29m Coastal Management Risk Programme (no impact for BGCBC); £5m for the Social Care Workforce Grant. The Gate Fees Grant subsidised BGCBC’s fees re: waste and recycling.

2.14 – The cost pressures offset any surplus.

2.22 – Educational demographics (deprivation levels) had helped with the provision of free schools meals in Blaenau Gwent’s Educational SSA (Standard Spending Assessment) although BGCBC’s overall proportion of this funding had actually reduced.

At the liaison meeting it had been emphasised that the increase in IRPW rates for Member allowances 2022/23 were between 17%-19% compared with a 2% rise for staff wages. It was also queried if the proposed 4% increase in council tax could be reduced rather than increasing the reserves of the Council. Rhian Hayden (Chief Officer Resources, BGCBC) informed that BGCBC’s reserves were increased as per Audit Wales recommendations, but no amounts were stated (£2.4m underspend was to be allocated to reserves rather than reducing council tax).

The summary table detailed that BGCBC was to receive the lowest provisional settlement from Welsh Government out of all the local authorities.

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The cost pressures faced by BGCBC were queried and it was stated that such pressures were Wales wide and that only a portion of were funded. The cost pressures relating to CCTV were queried and it was stated that BGCBC were to enter into a future service level agreement with Caerphilly CBC to monitor the CCTV and this was to include enhancements and improvements to the service.

In response to a query BGCBC informed that the third party spend (£250,000 – appendix 3) was part of the best contract and procurement strategy and best value for money – savings identified by individual departments managing budgets.

It was reported that the Leader of BGCBC, Councillor Nigel Daniels informed that all comments made by Town & Community Councils at the liaison meeting would be taken into account, especially in respect of the proposed council tax increase and that all figures could change.

Questions/comments were invited:

Councillor K Jones JP thanked the Town Council’s representatives for attending and providing the information.

**Resolved** to note the information received.

 Meeting declared closed at 3.00pm.

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