

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 1.25pm on Tuesday 8th March 2022

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

Present: Councillor G Morvan, Chair of the Finance & General Purposes Committee, presiding
Councillors K Jones JP; D Hillman; L Harris; C Hillman; M Williams & K Jenkins

In attendance: Mrs T Hughes, Town Clerk / RFO

Prior to the commencement of the meeting the Town Clerk informed that no members of the public or press 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 no such declarations were received.

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 Mrs N Horner, Assistant Officer.

Further Resolved that the apologies be accepted.

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:

Renewal of annual subscription to One Voice Wales for 2022/23.

The Chair highlighted that the membership fee for the Town Council for 2022/23 was £1,537 and invited comments/queries:

- In response to a query, the Town Clerk informed that OVW provided an excellent resource for the Council and that she often requests advice and information which was received in a timely manner.

Resolved that the Town Council's membership to One Voice Wales for 2022/23 be renewed.

b) Audit Wales – (for information):

Information in respect of Audit Wales Fee Scheme for 2022/23.

In response to a query, the Town Clerk informed that no response had been received from Audit Wales in respect of the external audit and annual return for year ending March 2021, despite making enquiries. Recent communication with Tredegar Town Council had also confirmed that they had also not received any response from Audit Wales in respect of their external audit and annual return. All present agreed that Audit Wales service and lack of communication was extremely poor.

Resolved to note the information received.

Additional correspondence received with permission of the Chair:

Councillors D Hillman and C Hillman declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 2c.

c) Aneurin Bevan University Health Board – (for information):

E-mail informing of the Health Board's 'Roadshow' which would be at Ebbw Vale Market at 10am – 2pm on Friday 11th March 2022.

Resolved to note the information received.

d) Town Centre Manager (Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council):

In response to a query received from the Town Council, the Town Centre Manager responded (via e-mail) that the cost of an online Facebook training session (one hour session for up to 20 people) would cost £150.

Members considered and discussed this information and expressed disappointment and concern as to the proposed fee. Councillor M Williams informed that he could provide the relevant practical Facebook training (free of charge) required as he provides this in a professional setting as part of his work duties. The Town Clerk would contact One Voice Wales and other relevant organisations to enquire as to the legislative requirements in respect of the Town Council having an appropriate and fit for purpose Facebook page.

Resolved to note the information received.

e) Blaenau Gwent Foodbank (for information):

E-mail received from Wayne Evans, manager of Blaenau Gwent Foodbank confirming receipt of all payments received from the Town Council together with thanks and details regarding the number of individuals and families who had benefitted from the donations within Nantyglo and Blaina

Members welcomed the information which helped inform the public of the help provided by the Town Council. members also agreed that the figures illustrated the shocking need for help within Nantyglo and Blaina and that this was likely to increase due to the current increase in energy prices. A Member informed that every household within Blaenau Gwent would receive £150 off their council tax bill to help with the rising energy costs. Additionally, a loan was available from the Welsh Government of £200 which was to be repaid over five years (interest free). It was also commented that all energy companies had a duty to provide help and advice.

In response to a query the Town Clerk informed that whilst details of payments were made were already on the Town Council's website, this additional information could also be added.

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 March 2022.

Due to receipt of the information received by Blaenau Gwent Foodbank (see item 2e above), Members considered a number of options and due to the forthcoming elections agreed to a £200 donation to Blaenau Gwent Foodbank for the month of March 2022 and to continue to consider donations on a monthly basis until the Local Elections have taken place in May 2022.

Resolved that a financial donation of £200 be paid to Blaenau Gwent Foodbank in respect of March 2022 and **Further Resolved** that this be considered on a monthly basis until the Local Elections have taken place.

4. Independent Remuneration for Wales – Annual Report 2022/23:

Members were invited to consider the annual report of the Independent Remuneration panel for Wales in respect of payments to members of Community & Town Councils. Members were informed that some decisions will require resolution prior to the Annual Meeting of the Council when council positions and representatives will be resolved. Please note that only the information relevant to Town & Community Councils was included.

Members considered the information and the following comments were made:

- Financial loss payment was highlighted.
- There was a requirement for the Town Council to resolve the senior allowance payments/roles, financial loss payments and travel & subsistence payments.
- The determinations in respect of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor had already been resolved by Council.
- It was clarified that senior role payments had never been paid to the Leader of the Council and the Leader of the Opposition/minority group.
- There was a need to retain working Councillors.
- In response to a query, the Town Clerk informed that, for the time being, the basic

allowance was taxable as was any attendance allowance payments.

- Members noted that the changes contained in the report would take effect from 9th May 2022.
- members also noted the group number (group 3) the Town Council was placed in.

Resolved that the determinations be agreed as detailed below:

- Determination 44 – Mandatory, no resolution required.
- Determination 45 – that an annual allowance of £500 be paid to three senior roles.
- Determination 46 – that travel costs be paid (if claimed) in respect of attending approved duties.
- Determination 47 – Whilst unlikely, payment for an overnight stay and/or subsistence can be claimed whilst on an approved duty.
- Determination 48 – that Financial Loss compensation can be paid if claimed in accordance with the determination.
- Determination 49 – Attendance Allowance. Council has previously resolved that this be paid if claimed.
- Determination 50 – Mayoral Payment. Council has previously resolved this payment.
- Determination 51 – Deputy Mayoral Payment. Council has previously resolved this payment.
- Determination 52 – Application of the remuneration framework by relevant group) – included within specific determinations as stated.
- Determination 53 – Not currently applicable.

Additionally Resolved that the report be agreed in its entirety.

5. **Budget Expenditure:**

Members were invited to consider the report in respect of budget expenditure and reserve accounts and if appropriate approve the recommendation.

The Chair informed that the report was presented to Council as a result of appropriate advice from the Internal Auditor whilst undertaking periodic checks.

The Town Clerk informed that whilst the Council had already resolved the use of specific reserve accounts in respect of the Events budget and the Miscellaneous budget, it was best practice for Council to be made aware of this requirement and for Council to specifically resolve the use of the reserve accounts. In respect of the s.137/Financial Donations budget, no specific reserve account had been allocated and therefore Members were requested to consider the virement of a maximum of £1,000 from the RFO Contingency reserve account to make up the short fall (due to the ongoing support provided to Blaenau Gwent Foodbank).

In response to a query, the Town Clerk informed that the OWL remote meeting system should be delivered next week (week commencing 14th March 2022).

A Member informed that the bullet point 'to comply fully with the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations is not recommended that Standing Orders be suspended when

considering financial matters' – was sometimes necessary to make a point and not to challenge Council.

Resolved to support the recommendations as contained within the report and **Further Resolved** to support the comments and advice provided by the Internal Auditor.

6. 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 are also reminded that applications would need to be considered in conjunction with the current policy.

a) *None received to date.*

Resolved accordingly.

7. Salem Chapel:

Members were invited to consider the attached inspection report:

- February 2022:

Questions and comments were invited:

In response to a query re: 'had the condition of the Chapel changed or altered in any way?' The Town Clerk informed that there were no obvious changes to the building to her untrained eye except for general deterioration as to be expected.

Resolved that the report be approved.

8. Confidential Information:

The following item(s) may 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** that the motion be supported.

Meeting declared closed at 2.05pm