

Item no. 4

NANTYGLO & BLAINA TOWN COUNCIL CYNGOR TREF NANT-Y-GLO A BLAENAU

Mrs T Hughes Town Clerk/RFO
Council Offices, Blaina Institute, High Street, Blaina NP13 3BN
Swyddfa'r r Cyngor, Sefydliad Blaenau, Y Stryd Fawr, Blaenau, NP13 3BN
Tel: 01495 292817 e-mail: clerk@nantygloandblainatc.co.uk

Minutes of the Meeting of the Full Council held remotely at 1.00pm on Tuesday 25th January 2022

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

Present: Councillor D Hillman, Town Mayor, presiding
Councillors G Morvan; C Hillman; K Rowland; K Jenkins; K Jones JP & L Harris

In attendance: Mrs T Hughes, Town Clerk / RFO
Mrs N Horner, Assistant Officer

Prior to the commencement of the meeting, the Town Clerk informed that there were no members of the press and/or public 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. Please note that all declarations of interest must be recorded in the book provided. **Resolved** to note that no such declarations were received.

1. Apologies:

Members were invited to consider the apologies for absence received and to formally resolve to accept. **Resolved** to note that apologies were received from Councillors L Emanuel and M Williams. **Further Resolved** to accept the apologies received.

2. Town Mayor's Communications:

The Town Mayor's communications for December 2021 and January 2022.

The Town Mayor informed that these two months had been very quiet but that in December 2021 both he and the Mayoress had met the Blaenau Gwent Santa Sleigh into Blaina, which was filmed by Blaenau Gwent Officers Ms A Tippings and Mrs K Williams. This event was well attended and well received by the public. The Town Mayor informed that he had verbally extended an invite for the Town Centre Manager, Mrs K Williams to a future meeting of the Town Council.

Resolved to note the information received and **Further Resolved** to formally invite the Town Centre Manager to a future meeting of the Town Council.

3. Minutes of the Meeting of the Town Council held 23rd November 2021 (pages 93 – 98)

Members were invited to consider the above minutes and if appropriate to approve them as an accurate record of proceedings.

- a) Matters arising, for information & clarification only:

Resolved that the minutes be approved.

4. Minutes of the Events Committee Meeting held 23rd November 2021 (pages 99 - 101)

Members were invited to consider the above minutes and if appropriate to approve them as an accurate record of proceedings.

- a) Matters arising, for information & clarification only:

Resolved that the minutes be approved.

5. Minutes of the Planning & Highways Committee Meeting held 14th December 2021 (pages 102 - 106)

Members were invited to consider the above minutes and if appropriate to approve them as an accurate record of proceedings.

- a) Matters arising, for information & clarification only:

Resolved that the minutes be approved.

6. Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee Meeting held 14th December 2021 (pages 107 – 113)

Members were invited to consider the above minutes and if appropriate to approve them as an accurate record of proceedings.

- a) Matters arising, for information & clarification only:

Page 111 (5) – the resolution to hold the award presentations at Blaina Community Centre was reiterated.

Resolved that the minutes be approved.

7. Minutes of the Task & Finish Group (Attendance Allowance, Budget & Precept) Meeting held 16th December 2021 (pages 114 – 117)

Members were invited to consider the above minutes and if appropriate to approve them as an accurate record of proceedings.

- a) Matters arising, for information & clarification only:

Resolved that the minutes be approved.

8. Minutes of the Planning & Highways Committee Meeting held 11th January 2022 (pages 118 – 119)

Members were invited to consider the above minutes and if appropriate to approve them as an accurate record of proceedings.

- a) Matters arising, for information & clarification only:

Page 118 (2a) – add ‘as a purchasing tool for the Town Council’.

Page 119 (3a) – should read ‘Members discussed how large the area of the decking was but no objections were made’.

Resolved that the minutes be approved.

9. Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee Meeting held 11th January 2022 (pages 120 – 127)

Members were invited to consider the above minutes and if appropriate to approve them as an accurate record of proceedings.

a) Matters arising, for information & clarification only:

Page 125 (6b) – it was clarified that the terms of the proposed attendance allowance required clarification but was agreed in principle. It was agreed to reword to ‘one Member supported all proposals in respect of the precept and budget except those relating to Members Remuneration and Attendance Allowance’.

Resolved that the minutes be approved.

10. Correspondence:

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

a) One Voice Wales – (for information):

i E-mail re: Phishing e-mails.

Resolved to note the information received.

ii Remote training sessions January – March).

Any Member wishing to attend any training modules was reminded to contact the Town Clerk.

Resolved to note the information received.

11. Application to the Community Grant Fund:

Members were invited to consider the listed application(s). Members were also reminded that applications would need to be considered in conjunction with the current policy.

None received to date.

It was queried if the advertising of the Community Grants available could be looked at. It was explained that the form and policy was contained on the Town Council’s website but this could be looked at by the Task and Finish Group in relation to the Facebook page.

Resolved to note the information received.

12. 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.

NANTYGLO & BLAINA TOWN COUNCIL 2km no. 5 CYNGOR TREF NANT-Y-GLO A BLAENAU

Mrs T Hughes Town Clerk/RFO

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Tel: 01495 292817 e-mail: clerk@nantygloandblainatc.co.uk

Minutes of the Events Committee Meeting held at 14.10pm on

Tuesday 25th January 2022 via a remote meeting.

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

Present: Councillor K Jenkins, Chair of Events Committee, presiding
Councillors G Morvan, D Hillman, C Hillman, K Jones, K Rowlands,
And L Harris

In attendance: Mrs T Hughes, Town Clerk / RFO
Mrs N Horner, Assistant Officer.

The Assistant Officer (AO) informed that no members of the 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. Please note that all declarations of interest must be recorded in the book provided.

Resolved to note that no such declarations were received.

1. Apologies:

Members were invited to consider the apologies for absence received and to formally Resolve to accept.

Resolved to note that apologies were received from Councillors L Emanuel and M Williams.

Further Resolved to note information 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: Assistant Officer confirmed that no additional correspondence had been received.

a) Kieran Wells – Ge Views (for information):

E-mail re: quote for self-watering planters 1000 x 1000 x700 Discussion ensued as there were 2 planters showing on quote, but only a quote for 2 of them. AO to contact supplier for the missing planter quote.

Resolved to note information received and **Further Resolved** for AO to contact the supplier to gain quote that was not forwarded.

a) Amberol Ltd – (For information):

Email re; quote for self-watering planters meter square

Moved to note information received and suggested to defer to next meeting until further quotes are received.

Resolved to note information received and **Further Resolved** to defer to the next meeting.

b) Donna Wallbank – (For information)

information relating the Defib that are placed in the areas of Nantyglo and Blaina

Cllr Morvan explained that One Voice Wales has employed a lady to coordinate the defibs throughout Wales and will be mapping out areas for local councils to receive possible funding and training for defibs in their local areas.

Resolved to note the information received.

c) Bruno Peek – (For information)

Email re; The Queens Platinum Jubilee Beacons – 2nd June 2021 and a guide to taking part.

Members suggested that more information is required to ascertain if Town Council could get involved. AO to contact Bruno Peek for further information.

Resolved to note information received and **Further Resolved** for AO to contact Bruno Peek for more details

d) David Arnold BGCBC – (For information)

Email re; Battle of Britain Roadshow contact MoD if interested in hosting an event. Roadshow being held at Blackwood Miners Institute 11 – 14th April 2022

Discussion ensued about the time to show case the Battle of Britain, how much material would be on display and if it could be displayed within the chamber of Town Council. Cllr Morvan will contact MoD for more details and enquire if suitable to display in chamber to see if it could be displayed in conjunction with Remembrance Sunday.

Resolved to note information received and **Further Resolved** for Cllr Morvan to make enquiries.

3. **Banners:** AO gave members a verbal update by explaining information has been sent to Matthew Mallet and Christopher Evans, but email returned explaining that an email has been sent to Andrew Parker as permission would need to come from the CCTV team.

Andrew parker replied in the 19th Jan, with the following message "The meeting hasn't happened yet, but I have been in discussions with our technical officers and contractors and although this isn't a final position, I think it is unlikely to be an option, as there are issues in relation any external factors on the poles having interference e.g. the potential to cause vibration from the wind, which would have the potential to create issues with recording quality".

"Hope this at least gives you some perspective of the complexities and considerations. I'm awaiting feedback from the relevant officer and the date to be confirmed".

Members suggested that a letter to be sent to Highways Officer asking if he could explain what the difference is between Brynmawr lampposts to those in Blaina is, as visually they appeared identical.

Cllr Hillman announced that he will be attending a meeting along with other Town Councillors and he will be sure to mention the issues that Nantyglo and Blaina Town receives with regards to banners.

AO explained that Town Centre manager had been contacted and she indicated that she could possibly to help with funding, but Town Council would need to find suitable locations for banners, she also confirmed that she had previously tried to get banners for Nantyglo and Blaina when Brynmawr and Abertillery had theirs but was told that there were no suitable lampposts in areas.

Resolved to note information received and **Further Resolved** for Clerk to write a letter to the Highways officer.

4. **Events:**

- a) AO informed that further to resolution agreed at previous events committee meeting, the awards will be presented at a small daytime ceremony. The details of which are to follow subject to review of restrictions by Welsh Government. Soon as details are announced members will be informed.

Cllr D Hillman referred back to previous minutes whereby it was resolved to hold the In bloom ceremony at Blaina Community Centre and under standing orders any resolution made could not be changed until 6 months has passed.

It was suggested to defer till next meeting to arrange date as Covid restrictions were to be announced at the next Welsh Government briefing.

Once restrictions were lifted members should bear in mind to arrange a ceremony also for the ARC awards.

Discussion ensued regarding the recent planted Christmas tree had been stolen.

Resolved to note information received and **Further Resolved** to defer to the next meeting.

- b) Queens Platinum Jubilee – Members were asked to have a think about possible ways to celebrate to Queen's Jubilee, information that was provided are for suggestions.

Cllr D Hillman explained that all suggestions put forward were achievable. Cllr Harris thought that given every child a memorial mug was an excellent idea as mugs have been given to school children for many years to celebrate Royal special occasions. i.e. jubilee, coronations and weddings.

Cllr C Hillman mentioned that she had received as a child a small tin of chocolates, that children had something to eat and also something to keep in memory.

It was suggested for AO to contact the local schools to ascertain if they are planning any events that the Town Council could help support and for AO to get some quotes in for next meeting.

Resolved to note information received and **Further Resolved** for AO to ask local schools if they were planning any events to celebrate Queens Jubilee and for AO to get some quotes in for items to give to schools' pupils.

Meeting declared closed at 14:55

Item no. 6.

NANTYGLO & BLAINA TOWN COUNCIL CYNGOR TREF NANT-Y-GLO A BLAENAU

Mrs T Hughes - Town Clerk/RFO
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Tel: 01495 292817 e-mail: clerk@nantygloandblainatc.co.uk

Minutes of the Planning & Highways Committee Meeting held via a remote on Tuesday 8th February 2022 at 1.00pm.

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

Present: Councillor K Jones JP, Chair of Planning & Highways Committee, presiding
Councillors G Morvan, M Williams, D Hillman, K. Jenkins, C. Hillman & L Harris

In attendance: Mrs T Hughes – Town Clerk / RFO.
Mrs K Williams – Town Centre Manager, Blaenau Gwent CBC

The Town Clerk informed that no members of the public were in attendance.
Resolved accordingly.

The Chair welcomed and introduced Mrs Karen Williams to the meeting and reminded Members of the Council's Standing Orders in relation to guest speakers i.e. that guest speakers inform of their presentation and that any questions were to be asked at the end of the presentation. Members were to ask one questions each with additional questions by the discretion of the Chair.

Karen Williams informed that she was appointed to the role of Town Centre Manager in November 2020 and that during the first eight months she dealt mainly with Covid grants for businesses. Prior to her appointment as Town Centre Manager she had worked in Business Rates for Blaenau Gwent CBC and in the Council's Housing Benefits department for many years prior to that.

Recently Mrs Williams had been working on a 'shop local' campaign to encourage people back into our local towns. Approximately 80 local businesses and market stalls were involved with this and positive feedback had been received. Mrs Williams was also helping with a rolling programme regarding digital feedback and seasonal campaigns such as 'love local for Valentine's Day'.

Digital classes were taking place with approximately 20 businesses having attended and received free digital and marketing training. Karen Williams informed that she would welcome any businesses referred to her for assistance. Additionally, a 'click and collect' service was being considered for town centres.

The Welsh Government was implementing a 'Meanwhile' scheme which was to help home/start up businesses to use empty town centre shops for a short period (up to 6 months) to allow businesses to establish and it was hoped that this would encourage businesses into high streets and town centres.

Karen Williams also informed that as Town Centre Manager she also helped organise events throughout Blaenau Gwent such as Santa's Sleigh in December which hoped to attract footfall into towns. Karen added that it was hoped that events would take place for Easter and the Platinum Jubilee too and that they were also looking to work with Town Councils throughout Blaenau Gwent. When the issue of banners throughout the high streets was discussed Karen informed that she thought they gave towns a sense of identity and helped to promote but that she hadn't been able to obtain permission to erect banners within Blaina due to the age and condition of the existing lap posts. Karen also informed that a digital screen was due to be installed in Blaina library within the next few weeks which was to promote Blaenau Gwent CBC services and other events taking place within town centres. As Town Centre Manager, Karen had also been working with local Police and the Leisure Trust in respect of engagement events with a current campaign about dog-fouling. Previous campaigns have included fly tipping and litter picks. Karen stated that her main role was to develop all town centres within Blaenau Gwent and that town centre loans were available over a five year period.

The Chair invited questions:

Q: Was there currently a lower demand for town centres or were owners applying to convert retail premises to residential premises?

A: Generally within Town Centres there were commercial premises on the ground floors and residential premises on upper floors, anything different was a planning issue. The Welsh Government accept that town centres were changing and there was an increased number of premises used for services and leisure. There was a need for a variety of amenities in town centres but and requests etc for changing the use of a building was a planning issue.

Q: Did the Town Centre manager have any powers to enforce shop owners/tenants to improve their shop frontages?

A: There were some grants available but the applicants would also need to pay a contribution. Blaenau Gwent CBC were also looking at ways to improve the basic image of retail properties but this would need to be carried out with owners and it was accepted that many shop/retail owners had little finance to do this. The involvement of schools could be looked into.

Q: The Santa Sleigh event was well attended and very successful – were there plans for additional events?

A: There was funding available until June 2022 and they were currently looking into Easter events. The Town Centre Manager could help facilitate events but not actually put on the event, e.g. in Brynmawr, the Town Centre Partnership organise events and the Town Centre Manager helps with funding and organisation.

Q: Was any help available regarding erecting banners throughout Nantyglo and Blaina? The Town Council had already agreed on the design for 12 but Blaenau Gwent CBC had denied permission for them to be installed?

A: The Town Centre Manager was fully aware of this issue and this had already been investigated and similarly, Blaenau Gwent CBC had denied permission, as they did for Ebbw Vale and Tredegar Town centres. The Town Centre Manager informed that she could assist with this if permission to install the banners was received from Blaenau Gwent CBC. The Town Clerk informed all present of the updated information that had been received from the Lighting Inspector at Blaenau Gwent CBC.

Q: Was there a marketing person available to assist the Town Council with the establishment of its Facebook page?

A: Possibly and the Town Centre Manager would investigate this possibility. The Town Centre Manager also informed that they were looking to develop a town centre website and town centre app.

Q: The Town Council were intending to hold suitable events etc for Nantyglo and Blaina but did want to duplicate what was planned for Blaenau Gwent in general.

A: Blaenau Gwent CBC were in the early stages of planning for the Jubilee but was looking into the 'beacons' and there was a need to engage with stakeholders. Bunting was being purchased for use throughout Blaenau Gwent. The Town Centre Manager stated that she was happy to attend future Town Council meetings regarding this issue.

Q: Many great ideas had been discussed today and it was essential that Nantyglo and Blaina needed assistance to ensure its voice was heard. As a journalist and editor of a local magazine, it was possible to help promote events etc.

A: It was accepted that engagement had been lacking and that it was essential to get the 'shop local' message out and then develop events such as selfie scenes, mini golf, climbing frames within town centres

The Chair thanked Mrs Karen Williams for attending the meeting and that Members of the Town Council looked forward to meeting her in person at a future meeting.

Mrs K Williams, Town Centre Manager left the meeting at this juncture.

Prior to the start of the meeting, Members were informed of the recent loss of the mother of the Assistant Officer, Mrs N Horner. A minute silence was held as a mark of respect.

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 of interest 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 in respect of the Assistant Officer Mrs N Horner.

Further Resolved to accept the apology 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.

Resolved to note the information received

a) Amy Hoidge-Hughes – Farm Garden Org UK:

E-mail - Building a National Allotment Development Team: Expressions of Interest (Communities) *(For information)*.

In response to a query, the Town Clerk informed that the Assistant Officer had provided local allotment groups with this information.

Resolved to note the information received.

Additional correspondence received with permission of the Chair:

b) Peter Barnes Chartered Architects (for information):

Notification of planning application submitted to Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council in respect of Blaina Institute re: change of use of part of the building to a café.

The Town Clerk informed that the correspondence received was advance notification only and no other details were provided. It was anticipated that the Town Council would receive the plans as part of the statutory planning consultation.

Resolved to note the information received.

c) Cheryl O'Dowd:

Members were informed of an e-mail received from Mrs Cheryl O'Dowd regarding the issues of car parking and traffic within Queen Street and the Garn in Nantyglo.

The Town Clerk informed that with permission from Mrs O'Dowd, the Blaenau Gwent Ward Councillors for Nantyglo had been informed of these issues.

Members discussed the information, and the following comments were made:

- The Town Clerk had advised Mrs O'Dowd appropriately. The Town Council could support and advise local residents but Blaenau Gwent Ward Members also needed to perform their duties.
- It was extremely difficult to drive through Nantyglo due to the number of cars parked.
- Blaenau Gwent CBC had been issuing fines within Nantyglo recently to people who had been parking on pavements.

- New legislation in respect of parking was now in force but it required effective enforcement.

Resolved to note the information received.

3. **Planning Applications:**

Members were invited to consider any further applications that may be received prior to the date of the meeting:

- a) Planning Application No. C/2021/0346- ADV. Units 1 - 4 McDonalds, Blaina Road, Lakeside Retail Park, Brynmawr:
Installation of 6 no. Fascia Signs (including roof letters and the 'M' logo letter).

Members commented that the sign was already installed.

Resolved that no representations or objections be made.

- b) Planning Application No C/2022/0015 - 68 Queen Street, Nantyglo, Gwent. NP23 4LW
To construct a domestic garage in the rear garden and access gates to rear road.

Resolved that no representations or objections be made.

- c) Planning Application No C/2022/0019 - 5 Bethel Place, Nantyglo, Blaenau Gwent, NP23 4UB:

Single storey rear extension and balcony.

The following comments were made:

- S.7 – applicant should have answered 'yes' to enlarging the roof
- The site plan provided was very small and difficult to see in detail

Resolved that no objections be made but to make the representations stated above.

4. **Licence Applications:**

Members were invited to consider the application(s):

None received to date.

Resolved accordingly.

Meeting declared closed at 1.55pm

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.

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

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 2 separate 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

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.

Tracy

From: Wendi Patience <wpatience@onevoicewales.wales>
Sent: 08 February 2022 11:44
To: Wendi Patience
Cc: Wendi Patience
Subject: TRAINING - JANUARY, FEBRUARY & MARCH 2022
Attachments: Application for free training place Cym.docx; Application for free training place.docx; Letter in relation to free training places November 2020.docx; Letter in relation to free training places November 2020Cym.doc; Bursary letter up to Feb 2021-22 - £100.docx; Bursary letter up to Feb 2021-22 £100 Cym.docx

Dear Colleagues,

Please find below details of Remote training sessions that are taking place in February and March, please bring this to the attention of your council.

The cost of the training is £30 for members or £50 per person for non members. You will be invoiced after the training has taken place.

There is a bursary available to eligible councils.

Session times are listed against the module date – Please note all training sessions are in English unless otherwise stated.

08/02/2022	Tuesday	Health & Safety - Module 7	6.30-8.00pm
08/02/2022	Tuesday	Understanding the Law - Module 4	2.00-3.30pm
09/02/2022	Wednesday	Chairing Skills - Module 10	6.30-8.00pm
09/02/2022	Wednesday	Local Government Finance - Module 6	6.30-8.00pm
09/02/2022	Wednesday	The Council - Module 1	2.00-3.30pm
10/02/2022	Thursday	Effective Staff Management - Module 18	6.30-8.00pm
10/02/2022	Thursday	The Councillor - Module 2 - IN WELSH	6.30-8.00pm
10/02/2022	Thursday	The Council as an Employer - Module 3	6.30-8.00pm
15/02/2022	Tuesday	The Council as an Employer - Module 3	6.30-8.00pm
15/02/2022	Tuesday	Understanding the Law - Module 4	6.30-8.00pm
16/02/2022	Wednesday	Advanced Local Government Finance - Module 21	6.30-8.00pm
16/02/2022	Wednesday	The Council Meeting - Module 5 - IN WELSH	2.00-3.30pm
17/02/2022	Thursday	The Councillor - Module 2	6.30-8.00pm
17/02/2022	Thursday	Local Government Finance - Module 6	6.30-8.00pm

17/02/2022	Thursday	Introduction to Community Engagement - Module 8	2.00-3.30pm
21/02/2022	Monday	Local Government Finance - Module 6	6.30-8.00pm
21/02/2022	Monday	Code of Conduct - Module 9	2.00-3.30pm
22/02/2022	Tuesday	Information Management - Module 15	6.30-8.00pm
22/02/2022	Tuesday	The Council as an Employer - Module 3	6.30-8.00pm
23/02/2022	Wednesday	Advanced Local Government Finance - Module 21	6.30-8.00pm
23/02/2022	Wednesday	Creating a Community Plan - Module 12	6.30-8.00pm
24/02/2022	Thursday	The Council Meeting - Module 5	6.30-8.00pm
24/02/2022	Thursday	Community Engagement Part II - Module 13	2.00-3.30pm
24/02/2022	Thursday	Understanding the Law - Module 4	6.30-8.00pm
28/02/2022	Monday	Advanced Local Government Finance - Module 21	6.30-8.00pm
01/03/2022	Tuesday	Health & Safety - Module 7	6.30-8.00pm
01/03/2022	Tuesday	Local Government Finance - Module 6	6.30-8.00pm
01/03/2022	Tuesday	Chairing Skills - Module 10	2.00-3.30pm
02/03/2022	Wednesday	The Council as an Employer - Module 3	6.30-8.00pm
02/03/2022	Wednesday	The Council - Module 1	6.30-8.00pm
02/03/2022	Wednesday	Understanding the Law - Module 4	2.00-3.30pm
03/03/2022	Thursday	Equality & Diversity - Module 14	6.30-8.00pm
03/03/2022	Thursday	Effective Staff Management - Module 18	6.30-8.00pm
03/03/2022	Thursday	Code of Conduct - Module 9	6.30-8.00pm
08/03/2022	Tuesday	The Councillor - Module 2	6.30-8.00pm
08/03/2022	Tuesday	Understanding the Law - Module 4	6.30-8.00pm
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10/03/2022	Thursday	The Council Meeting - Module 5	6.30-8.00pm
10/03/2022	Thursday	Code of Conduct - Module 9 - IN WELSH	6.30-8.00pm
14/03/2022	Monday	Understanding the Law - Module 4	6.30-8.00pm

15/03/2022	Tuesday	Local Government Finance - Module 6	6.30-8.00pm
15/03/2022	Tuesday	Community Engagement Part II - Module 13	2.00-3.30pm
16/03/2022	Wednesday	Effective Staff Management - Module 18	6.30-8.00pm
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30/03/2022	Wednesday	Information Management - Module 15	6.30-8.00pm
30/03/2022	Wednesday	Advanced Local Government Finance - Module 21	6.30-8.00pm
31/03/2022	Thursday	The Councillor - Module 2	6.30-8.00pm
31/03/2022	Thursday	The Council Meeting - Module 5	2.00-3.30pm

Please contact me via email to place a booking.

Many thanks.
Wendi

Mobile – 07929 715990

Tracy

From: Tracy Gilmartin <tgilmartin@onevoicewales.wales>
Sent: 09 February 2022 10:59
To: Tracy Gilmartin
Subject: Adroddiad ar Gyfarfodydd Aml-leoliad Adran 47 / Report on Section 47 Multi Location Meetings
Attachments: Section 47 Multil Location Meetings Sector Survey Report Cym.pdf; Section 47 Multil Location Meetings Sector Survey Report Eng.pdf

Neges ddwyieithog/Bilingual message

Annwyl Gynghorwyr a Chlerc

Cynhaliwyd arolwg ar Gyfarfodydd Aml-leoliad Adran 47 ar gyfer Cynghorau Cymuned a Thref gan Un Llais Cymru oherwydd nifer o bryderon a leisiwyd gan gynghorau wedi i Lywodraeth Cymru gyflwyno deddfwriaeth yn mynnu fod rhaid i bob cyngor oedd yn cynnal cyfarfodydd wyneb yn wyneb drefnu ei bod hefyd yn bosib cynnal cyfarfodydd aml-leoliad gan gychwyn ym mis Mai 2021. Atodaf yr adroddiad.

Mae Un Llais Cymru yn ddiolchgar iawn i gynghorau am gymryd yr amser i ymateb i'r arolwg holiadur.

Gobeithir y bydd canlyniadau'r arolwg yn helpu Un Llais Cymru i gael dealltwriaeth lawn o'r materion a wynebir gan y sector er mwyn gallu cynnal trafodaethau ystyrlon gyda'r Gweinidog Cyllid a Llywodraeth Leol a gweision sifil ynghylch gweithredu Adran 47 Deddf Llywodraeth Leol ac Etholiadau (Cymru) 2021.

Yn gywir
Catrin

Dear Councillors and Clerk

A survey on Section 47 Multi Location Meetings for Community and Town Councils was conducted by One Voice Wales due to several concerns raised by Councils following the introduction of legislation by Welsh Government requiring all Councils holding face to face meetings to have the facility for multi-location meetings with effect from May 2021. The report is attached.

One Voice Wales is very appreciative of the time Councils have taken in responding to the questionnaire survey.

The results of the survey are intended to assist OVW to fully understand the issues being faced by the sector in order to effectively pursue dialogue with the Minister for Finance and Local Government and civil servants in relation to implementation of Section 47 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

Yours sincerely
Catrin

Dr Catrin Jones
Policy Officer / Swyddog Polisi
One Voice Wales / Un Llais Cymru



Un Llais Cymru



One Voice Wales

**Section 47 Multi Locations Meetings
Sector Survey 2021**



Remote Working Survey

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Executive Summary	

This survey on Section 47 Multi Location Meetings for Community and Town Councils was conducted by One Voice Wales due to several concerns raised by Councils following the introduction of legislation by Welsh Government requiring all Councils holding face to face meetings to have the facility for multi-location meetings with effect from May 2021. Without this facility, the legislation specifies that Councils should meet only remotely. A bilingual survey on survey monkey was undertaken via an email sent to all 735 Community and Town Councils in Wales on 3 November with a closing date of 26 November 2021. The survey asked a number of factual questions regarding the holding of multi-location meetings in light of the Section 47 Welsh Government Multi Location Meetings regulations passed by the Welsh Government. Detailed results are available in the Appendix.

A total of 277 Community and Town Councils responded to the survey which is 37.68 % of the current Councils in Wales. This is about average for email surveys since they usually secure between 25-33% response rates. This is a lower level of engagement than in other email surveys undertaken by One Voice Wales in the last 18 months and although a good indicator the results may not capture the full picture in terms of the views and opinions of Councils across Wales on the level of use of

multi-location meetings, costs involved, their benefits and disbenefits and issues facing Councils in implementing them.

Just over half of respondents (55.43%) were meeting remotely, less than 20% meeting on a multi-location basis (18.84%) and a quarter (25.7%) meeting by other means. This indicates a very low take up currently for multi-location meetings. When asked about the preferred method for holding meetings (Q4), less than a half of respondents preferred multi-locations meetings (46.91%), 18.91% preferred remote only, while over a third (34.18%) preferred meeting by other means (ie face-to-face).

Respondents not holding multi-locations meetings were asked what was preventing them from doing so. Over half stated that this was due to lack of broadband facilities (57.08%), followed by lack of finance to install facilities (45.42%), lack of knowledge as to how to create multi-location facilities (41.67%), poor wi-fi reception in the community (40%). A third of respondents (33.75%) also mentioned other reasons including: remaining on-line at present to support vulnerable members of the community due to the pandemic; mandatory wearing of face masks making communication difficult; currently setting up facilities; many councillors not having the technical skills and/or wifi facilities; the meeting room not owned by the Council; the need for impartial advice on appropriate facilities and set up.

Two thirds of respondents holding multi-location meetings agreed with the following benefits:

- People who are not comfortable with remote meetings can attend on a face-to-face basis
- Enables those with health issues to attend
- Enables people to attend in the case of inclement weather
- Enables people with caring responsibilities to attend
- Enables people working away from home to attend

With a half also agreeing:

- Enables Higher attendance levels
- Enables people who are away on holiday to attend

In terms of set-up costs of multi-location meetings, the vast majority had spent less than £500 on these (70.30%). However, for those who did not have the facility for multi-location meetings, over half had not yet identified the costs involved, with only 10% expecting to pay less than £500 and 17% expecting to pay over £2,000.

There is no denying the value which multi-location meetings can bring as an opportunity for Councils to bring their workings into the modern world. Many Councils have been able to implement Section 47 without issue. However, the survey has raised important questions regarding the legislation and its implementation as what appears to be a “one size fits all” approach which is not necessarily proportionate bearing in mind the different circumstances of Community

and Town Councils across Wales. These matters include the greater impact on smaller Councils and those without access to appropriate resources including effective broadband. The legislation has been passed without due consideration as to the practicality/logistics of making multi-location meetings a requirement for all Councils. There has been no adequate provision to enable planning for a transition period accompanied by a lack of communication, consultation and information to Councils on its implementation. There has been a lack of appreciation that many Community and Town Councils do not have the infrastructure or staffing knowledge and support to bring in a permanent, extremely challenging change of this nature so quickly. In effect the legislation threatens to prevent face-to-face meetings unless Councils have the facility to offer the multi-location facility. Many councillors would like to return to physical meetings but have continued with remote meetings as current requirements of section 47 cannot be complied with. Some Councils have also returned to physical meetings without having the facility for multi-location meetings and are therefore non-compliant with the legislation. A transition period with a planning window would have been better. However, even with such a transition period, the requirement to have multi-location meetings will be problematical and not possible for many Councils at present for logistical reasons as outlined in the responses. Given where we are, further clarity from Welsh Government would be helpful as to how these issues can be resolved. While many issues can be addressed by training, support, financial resources, availability of hardware, others are more difficult to resolve e.g. when a Council does not own its meeting room and there is lack of effective infrastructure and internet connection to have a workable solution.

Background and Objectives

This survey on Section 47 Multi Location Meetings for Community and Town Councils was conducted by One Voice Wales due to several concerns raised by Councils following the introduction of legislation by Welsh Government requiring all Councils holding face to face meetings to have the facility for multi-location meetings with effect from May 2021. Without this facility, the legislation specifies that Councils should meet only remotely. Specifically, concerns raised relate to the costs involved in meeting these new requirements, poor broadband reception in certain parts of Wales as well as the practical difficulties involved in ensuring that premises used for meetings can support telephone or video conferencing. The results of the survey are intended to assist OVW to fully understand the issues being faced by the sector in order to effectively pursue dialogue with the Minister for Finance and Local Government and civil servants in relation to implementation of Section 47 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

Methodology

A bilingual survey on survey monkey was undertaken via an email sent to all 735 Community and Town Councils in Wales on 6 November with a closing date of 26 November 2021. The survey asked a number of factual questions regarding the

holding of multi-location meetings in light of the Section 47 Welsh Government Multi Location Meetings regulations passed by the Welsh Government. Section 47 legislation requires Councils who are holding face to face meetings to have the facility for multi-location meetings, or otherwise Councils should meet only remotely. It included questions on:

- the name of the Council and level of precept
- what basis Councils were currently holding their meetings, and if multi-location meetings were not being held, what was preventing Councils from doing so
- the preferred method of holding Council meetings
- set up costs for multi-location meetings already being held
- estimated costs of setting up multi-location meetings if not holding multi-location meetings
- the benefits of holding multi-location meetings
- the disbenefits of holding multi-location meetings
- any other observations relating to multi-location meetings.

Results

1. Respondent Information

A total of 277 Community and Town Councils responded to the survey which is 37.68 % of the current Councils in Wales. This is about average for email surveys since they usually secure between 25-33% response rates. This is a lower level of engagement than in other email surveys undertaken by One Voice Wales in the last 18 months and although a good indicator the results may not capture the full picture in terms of the views and opinions of Councils across Wales on the level of use of multi-location meetings, costs involved, their benefits and disbenefits and issues facing Councils in implementing them.

2. Format of Current Council Meetings

Respondents were asked to indicate on what basis their Council was currently holding its meetings (Q3). Just over half of respondents (55.43%) were meeting remotely, less than 20% meeting on a multi-location basis (18/84%) and a quarter (25.7%) meeting by other means. This indicates a very low take up currently for multi-location meetings.

3. Preferred method for holding meetings

When asked about the preferred method for holding meetings (Q4), less than a half of respondents preferred multi-locations meetings (46.91), 18.91% preferred remote only, while just over a third (34.18%) preferred meeting by other means, being face to face in person in one physical location.

4. Reason for not holding multi-location meetings

Respondents not holding multi-locations meetings were asked what was preventing them from doing so (Q5) – 240 respondents answered this question. Over half stated that this was due to lack of broadband facilities (57.08%), followed by lack of finance to install facilities (45.42%), lack of knowledge as to how to create multi-location facilities (41.67%), poor wi-fi reception in the community (40%). A third of respondents (33.75%) also mentioned other reasons including:

- To remain on-line at present to support vulnerable members of the community due to the pandemic
- Mandatory wearing of masks indoors for public meetings due to covid restrictions makes it impractical for communication
- Lack of interest from the community
- Meeting room too small for safe social distancing
- Equipment not installed yet
- Currently receiving advice on set up
- Some Councils move around community for meetings and some buildings have no Wi-Fi
- Meeting room not owned by Council
- The need for impartial technical advice on how to set up
- Many Councillors want face to face meetings
- Some Councillors do not have the digital skills
- Some Councillors do not have wifi

5. Set up costs for multi-location meetings

Respondents were asked to indicate the set ups costs for holding multi-locations meetings (Q6). 101 respondents replied. The vast majority had spent less than £500 on set up costs (70.30%) with the remainder spending as follows:

£501-£1000 = 5.94%

£1001-£1500 = 7.92%

£1501-£2000 = 7.92%

Over £2000 = 7.92%

6. Estimated costs for future set up of multi-location meetings

Respondents not holding multi-location meetings were given the opportunity to state whether they had estimated the costs of setting up these meetings in future. Half of respondents (113 of the 226 respondents) had not costed this option. The others noted varied costs as follows:

Less than £500 = 10.18%

£501 - £1000 = 11.06%

£1001 - £1500 = 6.64%

£1501 - £2000	= 4.87%
Over £2000	= 17.26%

These figures differ a lot to Q6 above – more % expecting to spend over £2,000 while only 10% expecting to pay less than £500 (compared to 70% in Q6).

7. The benefits of holding multi-location meetings

When asked about the benefits of holding multi-location meetings (Q8) 272 responses were received. Respondents were asked to tick all that applied. The results are as follows:

People who are not comfortable with remote meetings can attend on a face-to-face basis	82.35%
Enables those with health issues to attend	76.84%
Enables people to attend in the case of inclement weather	73.16%
Enables people with caring responsibilities to attend	72.79%
Enables people working away from home to attend	65.44%
Higher attendance levels	58.08%
Enables people who are away on holiday to attend	50.74%
Other benefits	18.01%

Other benefits included:

- Allowing Council work to continue during the pandemic
- Those shielding can attend
- Hopefully more engagement with the public
- Ability to record for purpose of minutes accuracy
- Provides more flexibility
- Residents in all areas can attend
- Convenience and travel cost savings

8. The disbenefits of holding multi-location meetings

When asked about the disbenefits of holding multi-locations meetings (Q9) 259 responses were received. The results are as follows:

Difficulty for Chair in chairing meetings	65.25%
Difficulty for members engaging with discussions	63.71%
Difficulty as the premises is not owned by the Council	49.03%
Difficulty in managing voting arrangements	48.65%
Difficulty in setting up the meetings and managing the set up	44.40%
Difficulty in setting up translation facilities	30.89%

Other disbenefits	24.32%
Difficulty in preparing accurate minutes	22.39%

Other disbenefits included:

- Concerns about technical issues
- Cost and lack of technical expertise
- No or inadequate broadband/wifi coverage
- Many Councillors do not have broadband/facilities
- Increase in officer time to support meetings – small Councils only employ a Clerk for a few hours and this could eat into that time quite significantly
- Storage and transport of extra equipment when building not owned by the Council
- Can be difficult for members of the public accessing the meetings
- Does not enhance the purpose of the meeting
- Not practical for community business
- Difficult to discuss planning applications
- There is no interest from the general public to warrant the expense and inconvenience of setting up remote facilities
- Losing an opportunity to socialise informally
- Meetings are no longer local

9. Other observations relating to multi-location meetings

When asked about any other observations relating to multi-location meetings (Q10), 138 responses were received. The majority of respondents raised concerns relating to multi-location meetings and that due to a variety of reasons multi-location meetings are just not possible for many councils at present.

In summary, the concerns highlight that Section 47 appears to be a “one size fits all” approach which is not necessarily proportionate bearing in mind the different circumstances of Community and Town Councils across Wales. These matters include the greater impact on smaller Councils and those without access to appropriate resources including effective broadband. Issues of concern raised:

- legislation has been passed without due consideration as to the practicality of making multi-location meetings possible, no provision to enable councils to plan for the transition and the lack of communication, consultation and information to councils about this topic and the logistics of its implementation. There has been a lack of appreciation that many Community and Town councils do not have the

infrastructure or staffing knowledge and support to bring in a permanent, extremely challenging change of this nature so quickly. In effect the legislation threatens to prevent face-to-face meetings unless Councils have the facility to offer the multi-location facility. Many councillors would like to return to physical meetings but have continued with remote meetings as current requirements of section 47 cannot be complied with. A transition period with a planning window would have been better. However, even with a transition period, the requirement to have multi-location meetings will be problematical and not possible for many Councils for logistical reasons;

- the legislation should be enabling rather than mandatory; Welsh Government should allow Councils to be as flexible as possible and not impose unworkable conditions upon the sector;
- technical issues due to lack of effective broadband in rural areas being problematical and intermittent connectivity during meetings;
- lack of IT knowledge and equipment to enable members to access meetings, broadband and/or service line faults;
- many Councils would welcome guidance on platforms and suppliers due to the time required to research and set up a system;
- the need for ongoing training and support for Clerks and Councillors;
- set up for hybrid meetings time-consuming;
- problems when not Council owned buildings;
- hampers moving around for meetings due to technical matters;
- that no support has been given to Community and Town Councils to fund the technical equipment needed by Councillors e.g. by extending to Community and Town Councils the facility available to unitary authorities for claiming equipment costs refunds from Welsh Government;
- lack of engagement by the public;
- difficulty in effective chairing of meetings;
- stifling discussion. Loss of social contact and spontaneous discussions before and after meetings, thereby affecting social cohesion; Discussions are more effective in face-to-face meetings;
- difficult to manage the voting process;
- difficult to prepare the minutes;
- natural resistance to change and operating differently: Councillors lacking IT knowledge and either without the necessary hardware or internet for video meetings or not wanting to use the facilities they have to do so;
- chairing meetings being more difficult, particularly when some Councillors do not use video conferencing but phone in, thus making it a challenge to manage the voting system and knowing when

Councillors wish to contribute to discussions. Background noise during meetings is an issue if microphones are not muted;

- issues with the discussion of highly disputed agenda items and that these would be better conducted face-to-face;
- the logistics of providing translation facilities and costs;
- signing of cheques more difficult;

Benefits of multi-location meetings

- great if it can be implemented;
- a fantastic opportunity for Councils bringing workings into the modern world. However, it would have been better to be given 12 months notice to plan this change, budget and research suitable options;
- make it easier as well as cost effective to get all the stakeholders at one place without compelling them to move out of their office or home;
- enables a higher level of attendance;
- business transacted more effectively;
- enables Councils to continue with their business during the pandemic crisis;
- a very positive addition to the work of town councils in Wales, enabling a more inclusive attendance at council meetings;
- maybe it will enhance participation in local democracy, by encouraging more people to stand for election as Councillors and help in diversifying membership and attracting new members by those who may have found physical attendance difficult;
- helps to enhance and support local democracy; makes it easier for the public to attend meetings;
- environmental benefits with reduction in carbon emission and avoiding unnecessary travel time;
- Mitigating the effect of extenuating circumstances e.g. the pandemic and bad weather in winter months which can affect attendance at physical meetings, particularly in rural areas;

Conclusions and Recommendations

There is no denying the value which multi-location meetings can bring as an opportunity for Councils to bring their workings into the modern world. Many Councils have been able to implement Section 47 without issue. However, the survey has raised important questions regarding the legislation and its implementation as what appears to be a “one size fits all” approach which is not necessarily proportionate bearing in mind the different circumstances of Community and Town Councils across Wales. These matters include the greater impact on smaller Councils and those without access to appropriate resources including effective broadband. The legislation has been passed without due consideration as

to the practicality/logistics of making multi-location meetings a requirement for all Councils. There has been no adequate provision to enable planning for a transition period and the lack of communication, consultation and information to Councils on its implementation. There has been a lack of appreciation that many Community and Town Councils do not have the infrastructure or staffing knowledge and support to bring in a permanent, extremely challenging change of this nature so quickly. In effect the legislation threatens to prevent face-to-face meetings unless Councils have the facility to offer the multi-location facility. Many councillors would like to return to physical meetings but have continued with remote meetings as current requirements of section 47 cannot be complied with. Some Councils have also returned to physical meetings without having the facility for multi-location meetings and are therefore non-compliant with the legislation. A transition period with a planning window would have been better. However, even with such a transition period, the requirement to have multi-location meetings will be problematical and not possible for many Councils at present for logistical reasons as outlined in the responses. Given where we are, further clarity from Welsh Government would be helpful as to how these issues can be resolved. While many issues can be addressed by training, support, financial resources, availability of hardware, others are more difficult to resolve e.g. when a Council does not own its meeting room and there is lack of effective infrastructure and internet connection to have a workable solution.

Thanks

One Voice Wales is very appreciative of the time Councils have taken in responding to the questionnaire survey. The results of the survey are intended to assist OVW to fully understand the issues being faced by the sector in order to effectively pursue dialogue with the Minister for Finance and Local Government and civil servants in relation to implementation of Section 47 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

ABOUT ONE VOICE WALES

One Voice Wales is the national representative organisation for Community and Town Councils throughout Wales. The vision subscribed to by One Voice Wales is:

"Working with local councils in Wales to shape places communities want to live in"

One Voice Wales aims to support Community and Town Councils in achieving this vision and has adopted the following Mission Statement to guide its work:

"To represent the interests of Community and Town Councils; raise awareness and understanding of this primary tier of government; and work collaboratively with our partners to ensure the sector contributes fully to the goal of developing dynamic and sustainable communities in Wales."

One Voice Wales
24c College Street
Ammanford
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01269 595 400
admin@onevoicewales.wales
www.onevoicewales.org.uk

Tracy

From: Shan Bowden <sbowden@onevoicewales.wales>
Sent: 15 February 2022 13:07
To: Tracy
Subject: RE: Nantyglo & Blaina TC - Pre Election Period (Purdah) - C5
Attachments: LGA Pre-Election Period Guidance - 6 November 2019.pdf

Hi Tracy,

The Pre-Election Period formerly known as Purdah begins for all Councils on 16th March 2022.

Councils do not dissolve councillors remain as serving councillors until 4th May 2022.

During the pre-election period councils need to be careful to ensure their resources are not used to promote a particular candidate or party and that no advantage is given to existing councillors that other candidates wouldn't have access to

You should not:

Produce publicity on matters which are politically controversial or assist an existing councillor with re-election

Make references to individual candidates or parties in press releases

Arrange proactive media or events involving candidates

Issue photographs which include candidates

Supply council photographs or other materials to political group staff unless you have verified that they will not be used for campaigning purposes

Continue hosting third party blogs or e-communications including social media

Councils can continue to meet to carry out normal business but they should not be making decisions or announcements on new projects/services/schemes.

I know some councils choose not to meet or do business leaving the clerk and staff to do the basics but there is nothing to say a council cannot meet they can meet to continue normal business it is for the Council to decide.

Its more about not using the Council as a platform to favour one political party over another.

Also attached is guidance issued by the Local Government Association that references Wales.

I hope this helps

Regards

Shân

Shân Bowden,
Development Officer/Swyddog Datblygu
One Voice Wales / Un Llais Cymru
24c College Street / Stryd y Coleg

NANTYGLO & BLAINA
15 FEB 2022
TOWN COUNCIL

A short guide to publicity during the pre-election period

NANTYGLO & BLAINA

15 FEB 2022

TOWN COUNCIL

Updated 6 November 2019

Guide

A short guide to publicity during the pre-election period

Introduction

In response to requests from council communications teams to produce simple guidance for communicating during the pre-election period (also known as 'purdah'), we are publishing this short, updated guide.

This document provides guidance on the publicity restrictions that should be observed during the pre-election period. **It should be read in conjunction with any guidance produced by your own Returning Officer and/or Monitoring Officer, which provides specific advice about your local circumstances.**

It is important to note that pre-election rules restrict activity wider than just publicity. Use of council facilities and resources; developing new policies and holding events (including some meetings) featuring elected officials should all be carefully considered during a period of heightened sensitivity.

The term 'purdah' has come into popular use across central and local government to describe the period of time immediately before elections or referendums when specific restrictions on communications activity are in place. The terms 'pre-election period' and 'heightened sensitivity' are also used.

2019 General Election

The Prime Minister has announced a General Election on 12 December 2019.

The Government has also released guidance on purdah for the Civil Service, announcing that for central government, the pre-election period started at midnight (00:01hrs) on Wednesday 6 November. The guidance states that 'special care must be taken during the course of an election since material produced with complete impartiality, which would be accepted as objective in ordinary times, may generate criticism during an election period'.¹

Although this guidance relates to the Civil Service, it means local government is in a period of 'heightened sensitivity' as set out in the local government code governing publicity.

Whilst this is prior to the publication of the notice of election, the code applies at all times.

In line with the principles set out in the code, extra care should be taken when undertaking anything which could directly, or be perceived to, affect support for a party or candidate. However, it's always worth checking with your own Returning Officer and/or Monitoring Officer.

Local government sometimes views this period as a time when communications has to shut down completely. This is not the case, and the ordinary functions of councils can continue, but some restrictions do apply, by law.

¹ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/844380/General_Election_Guidance_2019.pdf

The Code

The Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity is based around seven principles to ensure that all communications activity:

- is lawful
- is cost effective
- is objective
- is even-handed
- is appropriate
- has regard to equality and diversity
- is issued with care during periods of heightened sensitivity.

This last principle, to ensure special care is taken during periods of heightened sensitivity, is of particular relevance during the pre-election period.

The publication of press notices and information regarding the holding of polls are exempt from these restrictions as is providing factual responses to specific requests for information, for example, information about how people can register to vote.

At all times, local authorities should ensure that publicity complies with all applicable statutory provisions, including the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity 2011. Paid-for advertising must comply with the Advertising Standards Authority's Advertising Codes.

In general, authorities should not issue any publicity which seeks to influence voters, ensure that publicity relating to policies and proposals from central government is balanced and factually accurate, and comply with laws which prohibit political advertising on television or radio.

Legal basis and official guidance

The pre-election restrictions are governed by Section 2 of the Local Government Act 1986², as amended in 1988.³ Essentially councils should **'not publish any material which, in whole or in part, appears to be designed to affect public support for a political party'**.

Section 4⁴ of the Act makes clear that councils need to have regard to the code of recommended practice that supports the Act which replaced all previous guidance. The essential points from the code are:

- In general you should not issue any publicity which seeks to influence voters (an exception being situations covered by legislation or regulations directing publication of information for explanatory purposes).
- Particular care should be taken during the pre-election period to abide by the Act.
- Consider suspending the hosting of third party material or closing public forums if these are likely to breach the codes of practice.
- Do not publish any publicity on controversial issues or report views on proposals in a way which identifies them with candidates or parties.
- Publicity relating to individuals involved directly in the election should not be published unless expressly authorised by statute.
- You are allowed to publish factual information which identifies the names, constituencies and parties of candidates at elections.

2 www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1986/10/section/2

3 www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1988/9/section/27

4 www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1986/10/section/4

What this means in practice

Publicity is defined as **‘any communication, in whatever form, addressed to the public at large or to a section of the public’**.

The first question to ask is ‘could a reasonable person conclude that you are spending public money to influence the outcome of the election?’ In other words it must pass the ‘is it reasonable’ test. When making your decision, you should consider the following:

You should **not**:

- produce publicity on matters which are politically controversial
- make references to individual candidates or parties in press releases
- arrange proactive media or events involving candidates
- issue photographs which include candidates
- supply council photographs or other materials to political group staff unless you have verified that they will not be used for campaigning purposes
- continue hosting third party blogs or e-communications
- help with national political visits (as this would involve using public money to support a particular candidate or party). These should be organised by political parties with no cost or resource implications for the council.

You should also **think carefully** before you:

- Continue to run campaign material to support your own local campaigns. If the campaign is already running and is non-controversial (for example, on issues like recruitment, recycling or foster care) and would be a waste of public money to cancel or postpone them, then continue. However, you should always think carefully if a campaign could be deemed likely to influence the outcome of the election. In such cases you should stop or defer them. An example might be a campaign on an issue which has been subject of local political debate and/or disagreement.
- Launch any new consultations. Unless it is a statutory duty or considered normal council business, such as budget consultations. Councils should consider carefully before starting any new consultations or publish report findings from consultation exercises, which could be politically sensitive.

You **are allowed** to:

- continue to discharge normal council business (including budget consultations or determining planning applications, even if they are controversial)
- publish factual information to counteract misleading, controversial or extreme (for example, racist/sexist) information.

If you are in any doubt, seek advice from your returning officer and/or monitoring officer, legal or communications colleagues.

Ultimately, you must always be guided by the principle of fairness. It is crucial that any decision you take would be seen as fair and reasonable by the public and those standing for office.

Further guidance

You can find more information from the following:

- referring to advice published by your Returning Officer and/or Monitoring Officer
- the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity
- the LGComms leaflet, Cracking the Code⁵
- annex A – template letter to councillors.

⁵ www.lgcomms.org.uk/resources/resource-library

Frequently asked questions

Does this guidance only apply to councils?	No. The Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity covers the full range of authorities.
What happens during the General Election purdah period when there is no local election? Do rules still apply?	Yes. As this year is a general election year, the guidance applies to local authorities, even if there are no local elections.
Can council officers get involved in campaigning in their own time?	Officers who hold politically restricted posts, or who are likely to be involved or employed in connection with the elections, should not take part in a political campaign or canvass on behalf of a political party or candidate. Please check local arrangements.
Do the restrictions apply to officers who are members of a trade union?	Trade unions themselves are not bound by the Code, but individual officers are, and must have regard to the Code.
Can council press offices still put out press releases ahead of the election?	Yes. However, no publicity should deal with controversial issues or report views or proposals in a way which identifies them with election candidates or parties.
Can a council put out a consultation, for example about changes to library provision, during purdah?	Consultations should be considered very carefully during purdah as it is a period of heightened sensitivity and should not be put out if they contravene pre-election rules.
Do the restrictions apply to council notice boards?	Councils are required to publicise details of the election and how to register to vote. Material relating to wider political issues should not be posted on official notice boards which may be seen by members of the public. This includes publicity issued by, or on behalf of, a trade union.
Can councillors issue their own press releases or talk to the media?	Councillors are free to talk to the media and issue press releases, but must not use council resources to do so for campaigning purposes.
Can councillors still tweet or blog?	Councillors can continue, but must not use council resources (such as council twitter accounts, email accounts, telephones, etc.) to do so for campaigning purposes.
Can the council still publish its newsletter/magazine during purdah?	Yes, if it is done in the ordinary course of business and meets all other purdah requirements.

Acknowledgements

The LGA would like to thank LGcommunications, Coventry City Council, Warwickshire County Council and Eastleigh Borough Council in the creation of this document.

Annex A: Template letter for sending to councillors ahead of local elections

Dear Councillor,

Guidelines and restrictions on decision making and publicity during the pre-election period

As you will be aware, the [General Election] [is] due to take place on [12 December 2019], so I thought it would be useful to remind you about the guidelines and restrictions on publicity during the pre-election period that starts on **[6 November 2019]**.

From the start of the pre-election period ('purdah'), the council must comply with restrictions outlined in Section 2 of the Local Government Act 1986. In addition a Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity published in 2011 makes clear that particular care should be taken in periods of heightened sensitivity, such as in the run up to an election. The Act defines publicity as **'any communication, in whatever form, addressed to the public at large or to a section of the public'**.

Generally, the Act says that we should **'not publish any material which, in whole, or in part, appears to be designed to affect public support for a political party'**. The Code of Practice recommends that authorities should generally not issue any publicity which seeks to influence voters and that publicity relating to individuals involved directly in the election should not be published unless expressly authorised by statute.

Decision making

In relation to decision making within the council, the position remains that it is 'business as usual' unless there are very good reasons why this should not be the case. In the vast majority of cases, the pre-election period will have no impact on normal council business, including the approval of planning decisions.

What this means

- The primary restriction is on proactive publicity by the council which particularly relates to candidates and other politicians involved directly in the election.
- The council can still issue media releases on factual matters provided that these do not identify individual councillors or groups of councillors.
- Councillors are still free to respond to enquiries received from the media in a personal capacity.
- Individual councillors can issue their own statements, write letters to the local newspaper(s) for publication, contact the media directly or say what they like in a personal capacity, but must not use council resources to do so.

It is still possible for the council to issue statements on behalf of a councillor holding a key political or civic position provided it relates to important events which are outside the council's control and can be shown to justify a member response. These occasions are likely to be rare and to be the exception, rather than the rule.

I hope this letter provides you with the general information you need for the pre-election period, but if you have specific concerns or queries, please feel free to **contact xxxx**.

Yours sincerely,



BLAENAU GWENT | NEWYDDION EICH WARD BLAENAU GWENT | YOUR WARD UPDATES



BLAENAU GWENT | BRYNMAWR | 01/02/2022

Rheolwr Ward | Ward Manager | PC 2235 GAVIN DAVIES

NANTYGLO & BLAINA

14 FEB 2022

Anti-social behaviour

TOWN COUNCIL

January saw a gradual decrease in reports of anti-social behaviour (ASB) and crime in Brynmawr, Nantyglo and Blaina. The neighbourhood policing team has worked hard engaging with communities and conducted targeted patrols.

We are, however, receiving sporadic calls reporting ASB around the Lakeside area in Nantyglo, where it's been reported youths have been throwing eggs, mud and small objects at moving cars. I've been in conversation with the local authority and councillors to help resolve the situation and made a site visit to Pond Road in Nantyglo.

We'll continue to target and patrol all hot spot ASB areas. Should you have information that could help us identify those responsible, please contact us.

Off-road bikes

This is a priority of ours in Blaenau Gwent, and we are working closely with partners, landowners, commoners and farmers to tackle the problem. Throughout February there will be off-road bike operations running throughout the whole of the borough.

The issue is not just isolated to the hillsides: we've received reports of people using off road bikes near Brynmawr Square and the bus station. Our best successes in combatting off road-bikes have often come from community information and intelligence. If you know anyone who rides an off-road bike illegally or dangerously, please get in touch with us.

Shop Watch

Our officers are working with local retailers to introduce a new crime prevention initiative. The project will help partners share information/intelligence and coordinate patrol activity – with the aim of deterring theft and ASB.

Having identified this would be extremely beneficial within the area, we've been working with partners from the council and our very own NXT GEN team to create a network that supports the Brynmawr town centre and nearby retail park area. As a result, Shop Watch will be launching across these areas in the coming weeks.

Engagement

Police surgeries

These are regularly held across the area. Community support officers run the events to engage with communities and support and address any local issues. Anyone is welcome at these events, so please feel free to call in to talk about any concerns you may have.

The next surgery is booked for: -

Brynmawr Police Station	Mon 14 Feb	17:30 - 18:30
Blaina Police Station	Tues 15 Feb	16:30 – 17:30

Mobile police station

We've also been taking the mobile police station around Brynmawr, stopping and talking to residents across the area.

Community houses

Community houses in Brynmawr and Nantyglo are preparing to reopen – which is great news! We're working with Tai Calon and the Brynmawr Rotary, and this presents a great opportunity for communities to come together.

New community support officers

We're pleased to announce that we have two new community support officers joining us at the beginning of March. They are both extremely eager to join the team and are looking forward to their new role in community policing. Once they have arrived, we will update you and send out their contact details.



I gaol y newyddion diweddaraf am blismona yn eich ardal chi, dilynwch ni ar Facebook a Twitter.

I gwrrd â'ch swyddogion lleol ac i gaol gwybod mwy am amseroedd agor gorsafedd, ewch i'n gwefan.

For the latest news and updates on policing in your area, follow us on Facebook and Twitter.

To meet your local officers and find out more on station opening times, visit our website.




@GPBlainauGwent

@GwentPolice

@HeddluGwent




@GwentPolice

www.gwent.police.uk

NANTYGLO & BLAINA TOWN COUNCIL
CYNGOR TREF NANT-Y-GLO A BLAENAU

Council Offices, Blaina Institute, High Street, Blaina. NP13 3BN
Swyddfar Cyngor, Sefydliad Blaenau, Y Stryd Fawr, Blaenau, NP13 3BN

TEL: 01495 292817 e-mail: clerk@nantygloandblainatc.co.uk

Standing Orders

Adopted by Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council:

Signed:

Councillor D Hillman – Town Mayor/ Chairman

Dated: 22nd February 2022

Revised: February 2022

1. Meetings

No business may be transacted at a meeting unless at least one third of the whole number of members of the Council are present and in no case shall the quorum of a meeting, sub-group or meeting of a task and finish group be less than 3.

The code of conduct adopted by the Council shall apply to the councillors in respect of the entire meeting.

An interest arising from the code of conduct adopted by the Council, the existence and nature of which is required to be disclosed by a Councillor at a meeting shall be recorded in the minutes.

If a meeting is or becomes not quorate no business shall be transacted and the meeting shall be adjourned. Any outstanding business of a meeting so adjourned may be transacted at a following meeting, however a discussion may be held and reported at the next appropriate meeting.

If prior to a meeting, a Councillor has submitted reasons for his absence at the meeting which is then approved or received by a resolution, such a resolution shall be recorded in the minutes of that meeting. Apologies will only be accepted by Council in the case of a valid reason such as holiday, illness or hospital appointment etc. Late apologies may also be accepted if the reason for absence is similar to listed above. Please note that the list of valid reasons stated above is not exhaustive.

Meetings in person will commence at 6pm and shall not continue beyond a 2-hour duration except for the completion of urgent business for which the suspension of Standing Orders must be approved.

In accordance with election legislation, neither any member(s) political party, individuals nor speaker(s) are permitted to use the Town Council's meetings or premises for 'electioneering' purposes in the pre-election period (formerly known as 'Purdah').

In the event of a guest speaker being present at a council meeting the following procedure is to be observed:

- ☐ Members are to receive the presentation by the guest speaker
- ☐ Questions from Members are invited at the end of the presentation
- ☐ Members are to ask only 1 question each – if time allows and with the Chairman's permission, a second question may be asked.
- ☐ There is to be no discussion or exchange of points of view between Members and that all dialogue is to be directed through the chairman.

1a. Remote Meetings:

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 legislates that “from 1st May 2021, local authorities will be required to make arrangements to ensure their meetings are capable of being held remotely”. From May 2020 until March 2022, all meetings of the Council take place via the ‘Star Leaf’ application and enables all Councillors and Officers to attend via video link or phone link. From March 2022, council meetings will again take place in ‘person’ within the Council Chamber with the ability to hold remote/hybrid meetings using an appropriate platform. Meetings in person can only take place subject to statutory legislation providing for this and where a formal risk assessment having been carried out to ensure compliance.

2. Annual Council Meeting

In an election year, the annual meeting of the Council shall be held on or within 14 days following the day on which the newly elected councillors take office.

In a year which is not an election year, the annual meeting of a Council shall be held on such day in May as the Council may direct.

If no other time is fixed, the annual meeting of the Council shall take place at 6.00pm. In addition to the annual meeting of the Council, other ordinary meetings may be held in each year on such dates and times as the Council may direct.

The election of the Town Mayor (Chair of the Council) and Deputy Town Mayor (Vice-Chair) (if any) of the Council shall be the first business completed at the annual meeting of the Council.

The Town Mayor, unless he has resigned or becomes disqualified, shall continue in office and preside at the annual meeting until his successor is elected at the next annual meeting of the Council.

In an election year, if the current Town Mayor of the Council has not been re-elected as a member of the Council, he shall preside at the meetings until a successor Town Mayor of the Council has been elected. The current Town Mayor of the Council shall not have an original vote in respect of the election of the new Town Mayor of the Council but must give a casting vote in the case of an equality of votes.

In an election year, if the current Town Mayor of the Council has been re-elected as a member of the Council, he shall preside at the meeting until a new Town Mayor of the council has been elected. He may exercise an original vote in respect of the election of the new Town Mayor of the Council and must give a casting vote in the case of an equality of votes.

The business of the Annual Meeting is to proceed as per agenda.

3. Proper Officer

The Council's Proper Officer shall be the Town Clerk and another employee may be appointed by the Council to undertake the role of the Proper Officer during the Clerk's absence. The Proper Officer and the employee appointed to act as such during the Clerk's absence shall fulfil the duties assigned to the Proper Officer in Standing Orders.

The Council's Proper Officer shall do the following:

- i) Sign and serve on councillors by delivery or post or electronically (The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021) at their residences a summons confirming the time, date, venue and the agenda of a meeting of the Council and a meeting of a committee and sub-committee at least 3 clear days before the meeting.
- ii) Give public notice of the time, date, venue and agenda at least 3 clear days before a meeting of the Council or a meeting of a committee or a sub-committee (provided that the public notice with agenda of an extraordinary meeting of the Council convened by councillors is signed by them).
- iii) Subject to standing orders 4(a)-(e) below, include in the agenda all motions in the order received unless a councillor has given written notice at least 5 clear working days before the meeting confirming his withdrawal of it.
- iv) Convene a meeting of full Council for the election of a new Town Mayor of the Council, occasioned by a casual vacancy in this office.
- v) Must make the minutes of Council meetings (except confidential information) available to view upon reasonable request.
- vi) Receive and retain copies of byelaws made by their local authorities.
- vii) Receive and retain declarations of acceptance of office from councillors. Retain a copy of every councillor's register of interests and any changes to and keep copies of the same available for inspection.
- ix) Keep proper records required before and after meetings;
- x) Process all requests made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the General Data Protection Regulations 2018, in accordance with and subject to the Council's procedures relating the same.
- xi) Receive and send general correspondence and notices on behalf of the Council except where there is a resolution to the contrary.

xii) Manage the organisation, storage of and access to the information held by the Council in paper and electronic form.

xiii) Arrange for legal deeds (to be sealed using the Council's common seal) OR (to be signed by 2 councillors) and witnessed.

xiv) Arrange for the prompt authorisation, approval, and instruction regarding any payments to be made by the Council in accordance with the Council's financial regulations.

xv) Record every planning application notified to the Council and the Council's response to the local planning authority in a book for such purpose;

xvi) Refer a planning application received by the Council to either the Planning Committee or to a meeting of the Council, without notice, in order to facilitate a decision within the statutory time limit, except where delegated powers are awarded to the Proper Officer (see item 35).

xvii) Retain custody of the seal of the Council (if any) which shall not be used without a resolution to that effect.

xviii) Action or undertake activity or responsibilities instructed by resolution or contained in standing orders.

xix) Exercise delegated powers in conjunction with the Leader of the Council on behalf of the Council when it enters a period of recession i.e. the month of August and the period following the committee (last) meeting in December through to the committee (first) meeting held in January (see item 35).

4. Motions requiring written notice

a) No motion may be moved at a meeting unless it is included in the agenda and the mover has given written notice of its wording to the Council's Proper Officer at least 8 clear working days before the next meeting.

b) The Proper Officer may, before including a motion in the agenda, correct obvious grammatical or typographical errors in the wording of the motion.

c) If the Proper Officer considers the wording of a motion received is not clear in meaning, the motion shall be rejected until the mover of the motion resubmits it in writing to the Proper Officer in clear and certain language at least 7 clear working days

before the meeting.

d) If the wording or nature of a proposed motion is considered unlawful or improper, the Proper Officer shall consult with the Chair of the forthcoming meeting or, as the case may be, the Councillors who have convened the meeting, to consider whether the motion shall be included or rejected in the agenda.

e) Having consulted the Chair or councillors, the decision of the Proper Officer as to whether or not to include the motion in the agenda shall be final.

f) Notice of every motion received in accordance with the Council's standing orders shall be numbered in the order received and shall be entered in a book, which shall be open to inspection by all councillors.

g) Every motion rejected in accordance with the Council's standing orders shall be duly recorded with a note by the Proper Officer giving reasons for its rejection in a book for that purpose, which shall be open to inspection by all councillors.

h) Every motion and resolution shall relate to the Council's statutory functions, powers and lawful obligations or shall relate to an issue which specifically affects the Council's area or its residents.

5. Motions not requiring written notice

a) Motions in respect of the following matters may be moved without written notice:

- i. To appoint a person to preside at a meeting.
- ii. To approve the absences of councillors.
- iii. To approve the accuracy of the minutes of the previous meeting.
- iv. To correct an inaccuracy in the minutes of the previous meeting.
- v. To dispose of business, if any, remaining from the last meeting.
- vi. To alter the order of business on the agenda for reasons of urgency or expedience.
- vii. To proceed to the next business on the agenda.
- viii. To close or adjourn debate.
- ix. To refer by formal delegation a matter to a committee or to a sub-committee or an employee.
- x. To appoint a committee or sub-committee or any councillors (including substitutes) there to.
- xi. To receive nominations to a committee or sub-committee.

- xii. To dissolve a committee or sub-committee.
- xiii. To note the minutes of a meeting of a committee or sub-committee.
- xiv. To consider a report and/or recommendations made by a committee or a sub-committee or an employee.
- xv. To consider a report and/or recommendations made by an employee, professional advisor, expert or consultant.
- xvi. To authorise legal deeds (to be sealed by the Council's common seal) OR (signed by two councillors) and witnessed.
- xvii. To authorise the payment of monies up to £2500.
- xviii. To amend a motion relevant to the original or substantive motion under consideration which shall not have the effect of nullifying it.
- xix. To extend the time limit for speeches.
- xx. To exclude the press and public for all or part of meeting.
- xxi. To silence or exclude from the meeting a Councillor or member of the public for disorderly conduct.
- xxii. To suspend any standing order except those which are mandatory by law.
- xxiii. To adjourn the meeting.
- xxiv. To appoint representatives to outside bodies and to make arrangements for those representatives to report back the activities of outside bodies.
- xxv. To answer questions from councillors.

b) If a motion falls within the terms of reference of a committee or sub-committee or within the delegated powers conferred on an employee, a referral of the same may be made to such committee or sub-committee or employee provided that the Chair may direct for it to be dealt with at the present meeting for urgency or expedience.

6. Rules of debate

- a) Motions included in an agenda shall be considered in the order that they appear on the agendas unless the order is changed at the Chair's direction for reasons of expedience.
- b) Subject to standing orders, a motion shall not be considered unless it has been proposed and seconded.
- c) Subject to standing order, a motion included in an agenda not moved by the councillor who tabled it, may be treated as withdrawn.
- d) A motion to amend an original or substantive motion shall not be considered unless proper notice has been given after the original or substantive motion has been

seconded and notice of such amendment, shall, if required by the Chair, be reduced to writing and handed to the Chair who shall determine the order in which they are considered.

e) A councillor may move amendments to his own motion. If a motion has already been seconded, an amendment to it shall be with the consent of the members who seconded the motion.

f) Any amendment to a motion shall be either: To leave out words; to add words; to leave out words and add other words.

g) A proposed or carried amendment to a motion shall not have the effect of rescinding the original or substantive motion under consideration.

h) Only one amendment shall be moved and debated at a time, the order of which shall be directed by the Chair. No further amendment to a motion shall be moved until the previous amendment has been disposed of.

i) Subject to Standing (h) above, one or more amendments may be discussed together if the Chair considers this expedient but shall be voted upon separately.

j) Pursuant to standing order (h) above, the number of amendments to an original or substantive motion, which may be moved by a councillor, is limited to one.

k) If an amendment is not carried, other amendments shall be moved in the order directed by the Chair.

l) If an amendment is carried, the original motion, as amended, shall take the place of the original motion and shall become the substantive motion upon which any further amendment may be moved.

m) The mover of a motion or the mover of an amendment shall have a right of reply, not exceeding 3 minutes.

n) Where a series of amendments to an original motion are carried, the mover of the original motion shall have a right of reply in respect of the substantive motion at the very end of debate and immediately before it is put to the vote.

o) Subject to standing orders (m) and (n) above, a councillor may not speak further in respect of any one motion except to speak once on an amendment moved by another councillor or to make a point of order or to give a personal explanation.

p) During the debate of a motion, a councillor may interrupt only on a point of order or a personal explanation and the councillor who was interrupted shall stop speaking. A Councillor raising a point of order shall identify the standing order which he considers has been breached or specify the irregularity in the meeting he is concerned by.

q) A point of order shall be decided by the Chair and his decision shall be final.

r) With the consent of the member seconding the motion, a motion or amendment may be withdrawn by the mover. A councillor shall not speak upon the said motion or

amendment unless permission for the withdrawal or the motion or amendment has been refused.

s) Subject to standing order (o) above, when a councillor's motion is under debate no other motion shall be moved except:

- i. to amend the motion;
- ii. to proceed to the next business;
- iii. to adjourn the debate;
- iv. to put the motion to a vote;
- v. to ask a person to be silent or for that person to leave the meeting;
- vi. to refer a motion to a committee or sub-committee for consideration;
- vii. to exclude the public and press;
- viii. to adjourn the meeting;
- ix. to suspend any standing order, except those which are mandatory.

t) In respect of standing order 6(s)(iv) above, the Chair shall first be satisfied that the motion has been sufficiently debated before it is seconded and put to the vote. The Chair shall call upon the mover of the motion under debate to exercise or waive his right of reply and shall put the motion to the vote after that right has been exercised or waived. The adjournment of a debate or of the meeting shall not prejudice the mover's right of reply at the resumption.

7. Questions

a) A councillor may seek an answer to a question concerning any business of the Council provided 3 clear days' notice of the question has been given to the Proper Officer.

b) Questions not related to items of business on the agenda for a meeting shall only be asked during the part of the meeting set aside for such questions.

c) Every question shall be put and answered without discussion.

8. Minutes

a) If a copy of the draft minutes of a preceding meeting has been circulated to councillors no later than the day of service of the summons to attend the scheduled meeting they shall be taken as read.

b) No discussion of the draft minutes of a preceding meeting shall take place except in relation to their accuracy. A motion to correct an inaccuracy in the minutes shall be raised in accordance with standing order 5 (a)(iv) above.

c) Minutes, including any amendment to correct their accuracy, shall be confirmed by resolution and shall be signed by the Chair of the meeting and stand as an accurate record of the meeting to which the minutes relate.

d) If the Chair of the meeting does not consider the minutes to be an accurate record of the meeting to which they relate, he shall sign the minutes and include a paragraph in the following terms or to the same effect: "The Chair or any member may if he/ she does not believe that the minutes of the meeting were a correct record seek to have their name recorded against the majority decision.

e) Upon resolution which confirms the accuracy of the minutes of a meeting, any previous draft minutes or recordings of the meeting shall be destroyed.

9. Code of conduct (Wales)

All councillors shall observe the Code of Conduct and any subsequent amendments adopted by the Council. (All Councillors will be provided with copies upon becoming a Member of the Town Council).

10. Disorderly conduct

a) No person shall obstruct the transaction of business at a meeting or behave offensively or improperly.

b) If, in the opinion of the Chair, there has been a breach of standing order 10(a) above, the Chair shall express that opinion and thereafter any councillor (including the Chair) may move that the person be silenced or excluded from the meeting, and the motion, if seconded, shall be put forth with and without discussion.

c) If a resolution made in accordance with standing order 10(b) above, is disobeyed, the Chair may take such further steps as may reasonably be necessary to enforce it and/or he may adjourn the meeting

11. Rescission of previous resolutions

A resolution (whether affirmative or negative) of the council shall not be reversed within 6 months except either by a special motion, the written notice whereof bears the names of at least (3) councillors of the Council, or by a motion moved in pursuance of the report or recommendation of a committee.

12. Voting on appointments

a) Where more than 2 persons have been nominated for a position to be filled by the Council and none of those persons has received an absolute majority of votes in their favour, the name of the person having the least number of votes shall be struck off the list and a fresh vote taken. This process shall continue until a majority of votes is given in favour of one person. Any tie may be settled by the Chair's casting vote.

13. Expenditure

a) Any expenditure incurred by the council shall be in accordance with the Council's financial regulations.

b) The Council's financial regulations shall be reviewed once a year.

c) The Council's financial regulations may make provision for the authorisation of the payment of money in exercise of any of the Council's functions to be delegated to a committee, sub-committee or to an employee, up to the authorised amounts.

14. Execution and sealing of legal deeds

a) A legal deed shall not be executed on behalf of the Council unless the same has been authorised by a resolution. In accordance with a resolution made understanding order, any three members of the Council may sign, on behalf of the Council, any deed required by law and the Proper Officer shall witness their signatures.
(The above is applicable to a Council without a common seal.)

15. Committees

a) The Council may, at its annual meeting, appoint standing committees and may at any other time appoint such other committees as may be necessary, and:

i. Shall determine their terms of reference (see appendix 1)

ii. May permit committees to determine the dates of their meetings;

iii. Shall appoint and determine the term of office of councillor or non-councillor members of such a committee (unless the appointment of non-councillors is prohibited by law) so as to hold office no later than the next annual meeting;

iv. May appoint substitute councillors to a committee whose role is to replace ordinary councillors at a meeting of a committee if ordinary councillors of the committee have previously confirmed to the Proper Officer that they are unable to attend.

16. Sub-Committees

A) Unless there is a Council resolution to the contrary, every committee may appoint a sub-committee whose terms of reference and members shall be determined by resolution of the committee.

17. Extraordinary meetings

a) The Town Mayor (Chairman of the Council) may convene an extraordinary meeting of the Council at any time.

b) If the Town Mayor (Chairman of the Council) does not or refuses to call an extraordinary meeting of the Council within 7 days of having been requested to do so by three councillors, those three councillors may convene an extraordinary meeting of the Council. The statutory public notice giving the time, venue and agenda for such meeting must be signed by the two councillors.

c. The Chair of a committee (or a sub-committee) may convene an extraordinary meeting of the committee or sub-committee at any time.

d. If the Chair of a committee (or a sub-committee) does not or refuses to call an extraordinary meeting within 7 days of having been requested to do so by three councillors, those three councillors may convene an extraordinary meeting of a committee (or a sub-committee). The statutory public notice giving the time, venue and agenda for such a meeting must be signed by the two councillors.

18. Advisory committees (Task & Finish Groups)

a) The Council may appoint advisory committees (Task & Finish Groups) comprised of a number of councillors and non-councillors.

19. Accounts and Financial Statement

a) All payments by the Council shall be authorised, approved and paid in accordance with the Council's financial regulations, which shall be reviewed at least annually.

b) The Responsible Financial Officer shall supply to each councillor as soon as practicable after 31st March, a Financial Statement prepared on the appropriate accounting basis (receipts and payments, or income and expenditure) for a year to 31st March shall be presented to each councillor before the end of the following month of May. The Statement of Accounts of the Council (which is subject to

external audit), including the annual governance statement, shall be presented to Council for formal approval before 30th June.

20. Estimates/ Precepts

- a) The council shall approve written estimates for the coming financial year at its meeting before the end of January.
- b) Any committee desiring to incur expenditure shall give the Proper Officer a written estimate of the expenditure recommended for the coming year no later than December.

21. Canvassing of and recommendations by Councillors

- a) Canvassing councillors or the members of a committee or sub-committee, directly or indirectly, for appointment to or by the Council shall disqualify the candidate from such an appointment. The Proper Officer shall disclose the requirements of this standing order to every candidate.
- b) A councillor or a member of a committee or sub-committee shall not solicit a person for appointment to or by the Council or recommend a person for such appointment or for promotion; but, nevertheless, any such person may give a written testimonial of a candidate's ability, experience or character for submission to the Council with an application for an appointment.
- c) This standing order shall apply to tenders as if the person making the tender were a candidate for an appointment.

22. Inspection of documents

- a) Subject to standing orders to the contrary or in respect of matters which are confidential, a councillor may, for the purpose of his official duties (but not otherwise), inspect any document in the possession of the Council or a committee or a sub-committee, and request a copy for the same purpose. The minutes of meetings of the Council, its committees or sub-committees shall be available for inspection by councillors.

23. Unauthorised activities

- a) Unless authorised by a resolution, no individual councillor shall in the name or on behalf of the council, a committee or a sub-committee:
 - i. Inspect any land and/or premises which the Council has a right or duty to inspect; or

- ii. Issue orders, instructions or directions.
- iii. Commit or promise the support or action of the Council.

24. Confidential business

Members' attention is drawn to the points below:

- a) Councillors (and employees) shall not disclose information given in confidence or which they believe, or ought to be aware is of a confidential nature.
- b) A councillor in breach of the provisions of standing order (a) above may be removed from a committee or sub-committee by a resolution of the Council.

25. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

- a) Before exercising the power to promote well-being, a meeting of the full Council shall have passed a resolution to confirm it has satisfied the prescribed statutory criteria required to qualify as an eligible Community or Town Council (as stated in section 40(1) of the Act.
- b) The Council's period of eligibility begins on the date that the resolution understanding order (a) above was made and expires on the day before the annual meeting of the Council that takes place in a year of ordinary elections.
- c) After the expiry of its preceding period of eligibility, the Council continues to be an eligible Council solely for the purpose of completing any activity undertaken in the exercise of the power to promote well-being which was not completed before the expiry of the Council's preceding period of eligibility.

26. Matters affecting council employees

- a) If a meeting considers any matters personal to Council employee, it shall not be considered until the Council OR Personnel Committee has decided whether or not the press and public shall be excluded.
- b) Subject to the Council's policy regarding absences from work, the Council's most senior employee shall notify the Town Mayor (Chairman of the Personnel Committee) & Leader of the Council or, in his absence, the Deputy Town Mayor of any absence occasioned by illness or urgency and that person shall report such absence to the Personnel Committee at its next meeting.
- c) The Town Mayor (Chairman of the Personnel Committee) or in his absence, the Deputy Town Mayor shall upon a resolution conduct a review of the performance and/or

appraisal of the employee's job title and shall keep a written record of it. The review and/or appraisal shall be reported back and shall be subject to approval by resolution by the Personnel Committee at its next meeting.

d) Subject to the Council's policy regarding the handling of grievance matters, the Council's most senior employee (or other employees) shall contact the Town Mayor (Chairman of the Personnel Committee) or in his absence, the Deputy Town Mayor in respect of an informal or formal grievance matter, and this matter shall be reported and progressed by resolution of a newly appointed subcommittee.

e) Subject to the Council's policy regarding the handling of grievance (see employees contract of employment) and disciplinary matters, if an informal or formal grievance matter raised by an employee relates to the Town Mayor or Deputy Town Mayor (Chairman or Vice-Chairman of the Personnel Committee) this shall be communicated to the Council and progressed by resolution of a newly appointed subcommittee.

f) Any persons responsible for all or part of the management of Council employees shall keep written records of all meetings relating to their performance, and capabilities, grievance and disciplinary matters.

g) The Council shall keep written records relating to employees shall be secured under lock and key.

h) Records documenting reasons for an employee's absence due to ill health or details of a medical condition shall be made available only to those persons with responsibility for the same.

i) Only persons with line management responsibilities shall have access to employee records referred to in standing orders (g) and (h) above if so justified.

j) Access and means of access by keys to records of employment referred to in standing orders (g) and (h) above shall be held by the Proper Officer and provided only to the post holder and with good cause, to the Town Mayor (Chairman of the Personnel Committee).

27. Freedom of Information Act 2000

a) All requests for information held by the Council shall be processed in accordance with the Council's policy in respect of handling request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

b) Correspondence from, and notices served by, the Information Commissioner shall be referred by the Proper Officer to the Town Mayor. The said Council shall have the power to do anything to facilitate compliance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 including exercising the powers of the Proper Officer in respect of Freedom of

Information requests set out understanding order 3 (x) above (page 4).

c) Such actions are to comply with the provisions of the General Data Protection Regulation 2018 where applicable.

28. Relations with the press/media including Social Media

a) All requests from the press or other media for an oral or written statement or comment from the Council shall be processed in accordance with the Council's policy in respect of dealing with the press and/or other media i.e. The Proper Officer in conjunction with the Town Mayor.

b) In accordance with the Council's policy in respect to dealing with the press and/or other media, councillors shall not provide oral or written statements or written articles to the press or other media in respect of Council business.

c) Paragraphs 28a and b above also apply to all forms of Social Media where applicable.

29. Financial Matters

a) The Council shall consider and approve financial regulations drawn up by the Responsible Financial Officer, which shall include the following:

b) Any proposed contract for the supply of goods, materials, services and the execution of works with an estimated value in excess of £25,000 shall be procured on the basis of a formal tender as summarised in standing order 29(c) below.

c) Any formal tender process shall comprise the following steps:

- i. a public notice of intention to place a contract should be advertised locally;
- ii. a specification of the goods, materials, services and the execution of works shall be drawn up;
- iii. tenders are to be sent, in a sealed marked envelope, to the Proper Officer by a stated date and time;
- iv. tenders submitted are to be opened, after the stated closing date and time, by the Proper Officer and at least one member of the Council;
- v. tenders are then to be assessed and reported to the appropriate meeting of Council or Committee.

d) Neither the Council, nor any committee, is bound to accept the lowest tender, estimate or quote.

e) Where the value of a contract is likely to exceed the threshold specified by the Office

of Government Commerce, the Council must consider whether the Public Contracts Regulations 2006 (SI No.5, as amended) and the Utilities Contracts Regulations 2006 (SI No.6, as amended) apply to the contract and, if either of those Regulations apply, the Council must comply with EU procurement rules.

30. Liaison with and County Borough Councillors

a) As per Charter Agreement.

31. Co-option of Members of Town / Community Councils

a) When the council intends to fill a vacancy by co-option, the Council must ensure the process is as set out in Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, Part 7: Communities and Community Councils [Chapter 3].

b) All applications received for co-option are submitted to Members by way as an agenda item. A secret ballot will take place during the said meeting with the Proper Officer and a Member from each group to act as tellers. Please note that NO discussion is required.

32. Allegations of breaches of the code of conduct

a) On receipt of a notification that there has been an alleged breach of the code of conduct the Proper Officer shall refer it to a committee known as the Grievance committee (Standards committee).

(b) Where the notification relates to a complaint made by the Proper Officer, the Proper Officer shall notify the Chairman of Grievance (or Standards) committee of that fact, who, upon receipt of such notification, shall nominate a person to assume the duties of the Proper Officer set out in the remainder of this standing order, who shall continue to act in respect of that matter as such until the complaint is resolved.

c) Where a notification relates to a complaint made by an employee (not being the Proper Officer) the Proper Officer shall ensure that the employee in question does not deal with any aspect of the complaint.

d) The subject matter of notifications shall be confidential and, in so far as it is possible to do so by law, the Council (including the Proper Officer and the Chairman of the Grievance (or Standards) Committee shall take the steps set out below, together with other steps considered necessary, to maintain confidentiality.

i. Draft the summonses and agendas in such a way that the identity and subject matter

of the complaint are not disclosed.

ii. Ensure that any background papers containing the information set out in standing order 32(a) above are not made public.

iii. Ensure that the public and press are excluded from meetings as appropriate.

iv. Ensure that the minutes of meetings preserve confidentiality.

v. Consider any liaison that may be required with the person or body with statutory responsibility for the investigation of the matter.

e) Standing order (d) above should not be taken to prohibit the Council (whether through the Proper Officer or the Chairman of the Grievance Committee or otherwise) from disclosing information to members and Officers of the Council or to other persons where such disclosure is necessary to deal with the complaint or is required by law.

f) The Grievance committee shall have the power to:

i. seek documentary and other evidence from the person or body with statutory responsibility for investigation of the matter;

ii. seek and share information relevant to the complaint;

iii. grant the member involved a financial indemnity in respect of legal costs which shall be in accordance with the law and subject to approval by a meeting of the full Council.

g) References in standing order 32 to a notification shall be taken to refer to a communication of any kind which relates to a breach or an alleged breach of the code of conduct by a councillor.

Please note that following discussions with the Public Ombudsman for Wales Paragraph 32 as stated above should be substituted with the following:

32 Any breach or an alleged breach of the code of conduct by a Councillor must be referred to the Public Ombudsman for Wales who will provide advice and guidance as to how the matter should be dealt with.

33. Variation, revocation and suspension of standing orders

a) Any or every part of the standing orders, except those which are mandatory by law, may be suspended by resolution in relation to any specific item of business by way of formal recommendation for inclusion to the agenda. Such information will need to be provided to the Town Clerk at least 10 days prior to the date of the meeting.

b) A motion to permanently add to or to vary or to revoke one or more of the Council's standing orders not mandatory by law shall not be carried unless two-thirds of the councillors at a meeting of the Council vote in favour of the same.

34. Standing Orders to be given to councillors

- a) The Proper Officer shall provide a copy of the Council's standing orders to a councillor upon delivery of his declaration of acceptance of office.
- b) The Chair's decision as to the application of standing orders at meetings shall be final.
- c) A councillor's failure to observe standing orders more than 3 times in one meeting may result in him being excluded from the meeting in accordance with standing orders.

35. Delegated Powers

In the event of any period of recession e.g. the month of August and the Christmas period, the Town Clerk and the Leader of the Council jointly are awarded delegated powers.

36. Payment to Members:

The Town Council will consider the Independent Review Panel for Wales annual report in respect of Members Allowances. The Town Council will adhere to the mandatory requirements published within. The Town Council will also consider, and if appropriate resolve non-statutory guidelines.

Under no circumstances can a Member of the Town Council (whether elected or co-opted) become a paid member of staff, or for a period of up to 12 months after ceasing to be (LGA 1972 s.116).

37. Appointment of Town Mayor (or Deputy Town Mayor)

Prior to the Annual Meeting of the Council held in May, written nominations are invited in respect of the position of Town Mayor (Chair of the Council).

If there is a Deputy Town Mayor Vice - Chair of the Council) in post then that Member will automatically assume the position of Town Mayor (Chair of the Council) at the Annual Meeting (unless he/she declines the position) and nominations are then invited for the position of Deputy Town Mayor (Deputy Chair of the Council).

Members are able to nominate themselves for the position and the Member in receipt of most nominations shall be appointed as Town Mayor (Chair of the Council) or Deputy Town Mayor (Vice – Chair of the Council) (as outlined above).

Committees – Terms of Reference 2022/23:

General:

- 1.0 The Town Council will be in recess for the month of August when ordinarily no meetings of the Council will take place. Additionally, a Meeting of the Council and the Events Committee will not take place in the month of December.
- 1.1 All Members of the Council are Members of the Planning & Highways Committee; Finance & General Purposes Committee & the Events Committee.
- 1.2 The Chair of each committee is agreed and resolved at the Annual Meeting of the Council.
- 1.3 The purpose of each committee is to consider and if applicable, take appropriate action regarding any items of concern or benefit to Nantyglo and Blaina.
- 1.4 To set up a Task and Finish Group for each committee if agreed relevant.
- 1.5 All Task and Finish Groups must provide an update of their meeting and/or recommendations to the relevant committee for resolution.
- 1.5 All Members will be issued with agendas and any other relevant information for each committee meeting.
- 1.6 Minutes of the committee meeting will be submitted to the next appropriate meeting of the Town Council for approval and signature.
- 1.7 To award Freedom of the Town is by recommendation at a meeting specially convened for the purpose and requires a two thirds majority of those voting.

Planning & Highways Committee:

- 2.0 The Planning & Highways Committee will meet every second Tuesday of the month except for the month of August.
- 2.1 To consider and respond to consultations and express the views of the Town Council relating to planning applications; development plans and other related matters within the boundary of Nantyglo and Blaina.
- 2.2 To consider and respond to the relevant body in respect of licencing applications within Nantyglo and Blaina.
- 2.3 To consider and respond to the relevant body in respect of listed buildings; building regulations and conservation orders within Nantyglo and Blaina.
- 2.4 To consider and respond to the relevant body in respect of highways and environmental issues.

Finance & General Purposes Committee:

- 3.0 The Finance & General Purposes Committee will meet every second Tuesday of the month except for the month of August.
- 3.1 To consider and respond to requests for financial donations from local groups (in line with the resolved financial grants policy).
- 3.2 To consider and resolve all financial matters of the Town Council, including but not limited to: monthly income & expenditure reports; quarterly budget monitoring reports; reserve account reports; consideration and scrutiny of the budget and precept reports prior to resolution at Full Council & insurance matters.

Events Committee:

- 4.0 The Events Committee will meet every fourth Tuesday of the month except for the months of August and December.
- 4.1 Due to the nature of the Events Committee and its functions, a Vice Chair will be appointed.
- 4.2 To consider and if appropriate resolve a programme of events to be held within Nantyglo and Blaina including (but not limited to): ARC Awards; Primary Talent Showcase; Nantyglo & Blaina In Bloom; Flower, Fruit and Veg Show; Christmas Carol Concerts & Christmas Fun Nights.
- 4.3 To consider and if appropriate, resolve the siting of the Town Council's Christmas Lights together with the associated costs and issues.
- 4.4 To liaise with and develop working relationships with schools; groups and other bodies working with Nantyglo and Blaina as appropriate.
- 4.5 To consider and if appropriate resolve Civic Events and any other events / functions which would benefit the community of Nantyglo and Blaina.
- 4.6 No serving Councillor or employee of the Town Council can enter any competition or be nominated for any award, organised by the Town Council. This is to ensure that no unfair allegations can be made against any such individual or the Town Council. This will also help to ensure that any delays in the Council ratifying any such results are less likely to be due to the appropriate Council meeting not being quorate.

Personnel Committee:

- 5.0 The Personnel Committee will meet as required.
- 5.1 The Committee will comprise of a total of three members: the Town Mayor (Chairman of the Council); Leader of the Council and Leader of the Minority Group.
- 5.2 If any position is duplicated, the Deputy Town Mayor (Deputy Chair of the Council) will act as a substitute member of the committee.
- 5.3 The Committee will consider and act as a 'shortlisting panel' in respect of applications received for Town Council staff vacancies.
- 5.4 The Committee will form the interview panel (or determine the make-up of the interview panel) in order to interview for any Town Council Staff position.
- 5.5 The Committee will provide a recommendation to Council in respect of the result of any interview panel carried out.
- 5.6 The Committee will consider matters of grievance in the first instance and will then provide a recommendation to the Council.

NANTYGLO & BLAINA TOWN COUNCIL
CYNGOR TREF NANT-Y-GLO A BLAENAU

Mrs T Hughes - Town Clerk/RFO

Council Offices, Blaina Institute, High Street, Blaina NP13 3BN

Swyddfa'r r Cyngor, Y Stryd Fawr, Blaenau NP13 3BN Tel: 01495 292817

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Risk Management Policy

2022 / 2023

DRAFT

This Policy was revised and adopted by the Council at its Meeting held on 22nd February 2022

Signed by:

Councillor D Hillman
Town Mayor /Chairman of the Council

Risk Management Policy 2022 /23

Introduction:

Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council is committed to the effective management of risk at every level within the Council.

The purpose of this Risk Management Policy is to state the various risk types, the approach to each risk and management of them and assess annually.

Report:

1. Risk Identification:

This involves identifying the specific risks that face Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council. These include physical risks, environmental risks, risks relating to technology and damage to the Town Council's reputation.

2. Risk Assessment:

This is examining the potential for any risk of actually happening and categorising that as high, medium or low based upon best practice and available advice.

3. Risk Management:

This is managing the identified risk to:

- a) Minimise the impact
- b) Having contingency plans in place
- c) Taking steps to protect vulnerable items/assets
- d) Ensuring adequate insurance to cover the Asset Register which should be updated to include new purchases) and public and employee liability.

4. Contingency Planning:

Contingency planning is the pre-planning steps that need to be taken if a risk occurs. It is a plan for unforeseen events, including back-up procedures and emergency response.

These areas will be covered in detail as follows:

1. Risk Identification:

Usually seen as fire; financial liability; security; health and safety have been considered as the risks to be identified, assess and then managed. Other risks have been identified that impinge upon Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council include: pandemic risks; political risks; economic risks; social risks; technological risks; legislative/regulatory risks; environmental risk; customer/citizen risk; professional/managerial risk; partnership/contractual risk and the possibility of additional work and expenditure incurred by the Town Council as a result of services devolved from Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council.

All of these factors have a greater or lesser relevance to Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council, but all are real factors that have to be regarded. They will be analysed in turn as they relate to the Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council.

Physical Risks:

Fire:

The threat of fire is always present be it accidental or deliberate. A substantial proportion of the Town Council's Asset List is held at the Blaina Institute where the Council Offices relocated to in July 2017 and destruction by fire is a real risk but too is the loss of accommodation if there is extensive damage to the building. NBTC also owns Salem Chapel located in Blaina town centre. This also presents a fire risk due to it being unmanned (but secured) for periods of time. The risk does not just relate to the loss of fixtures, fittings and furnishings (many of which are irreplaceable) but could result in the temporary/permanent loss of the facility if the building was extensively damaged.

Financial Matters:

This is another area of risk as Nantyglo and Blaina Town Council is a custodian of public money with which includes a precept collected by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council via the Council Tax. The Town Council benefits from financial regulations that are rigorously imposed by the Town Clerk / RFO. Quarterly budget monitoring reports and bank reconciliations on accounts held by the Town Council are prepared and submitted for Members' inspection. Monthly expenditure is listed for Council approval at the Monthly meeting of the Town Council. Budget monitoring in the form of actual compared to estimated expenditure and explanations of all variances greater 10%. Additionally, reports informing Members of the Council's reserve accounts are submitted to Council for consideration three times per year.

Security:

The security of the building in which the current Town Council Offices is located is the responsibility of Blaenau Gwent CBC and Blaina Community Institute Ltd (who took over the running of Blaina Institute in 2017). The building is alarmed when the building is closed. Although unlike the ICC Building (in which the Town Council Offices were previously located) there are no lockable gates to the property and it is unclear if the building benefits from CCTV. The adequacy of the alarm system of Blaina Institute has been questioned by some users of the building although there appears to have been many inspections made on the system. The Town Council Offices benefit from a lockable code system to the doors together with robust locks.

Security of Salem Chapel will always pose a security risk due to the fact it is located within the main street and unmanned for considerable periods of time. The Chapel does benefit from a security alarm and its central location within Blaina High Street ensures that the chapel is not isolated. The Chapel is inspected on a weekly basis by the Town Clerk and Assistant Officer.

Health & Safety:

This covers both the everyday tripping and falling hazards and other more complex issues. Access to the current Town Council offices in winter could be compromised by icy surfaces or surface water during wet weather. The health issues associated with computer use (eyesight and back problems) is well documented. There is also a risk posed to the Town Council by staff illness. The current location of the Town Council offices can also pose a personal risk to staff security due to regular periods when there are no other users in the building.

Salem Chapel as a Grade II listed building also poses health & safety risks such as the entrance flooring and aisles might poses a hazard when wet. The stairs and raised stage area also pose an obvious hazard. The upstairs balcony poses a particular risk due to its low height. Although the Chapel is currently not in use due to dry rot, parts of the ground floor have been removed and as such are uneven and unsafe for use. This poses a risk for any staff conducting weekly inspections of the property. The presence of dry rot within Salem Chapel may also pose additional health and safety risks. Staff, Members and/or volunteers may also face additional risks whilst at Salem Chapel due to any lone working although information & guidance on lone working practices are issued to the Town Council and regular communication with staff & volunteers is maintained. The risks associated with lone working have reduced since the appointment of an additional member of staff.

Serious Public Health Risk / Pandemic (including Covid 19):

The Covid 19 pandemic first affected the UK in March 2020 and has continued to affect every part of life in the UK since then.

The Town Council, like every other sector has been affected and the Council, staff and Members have all needed to adapt its working practices to ensure that all relevant legislation is complied with and that the health and safety of its staff, members and users are safeguarded. The nature of the pandemic has meant that it has affected the Town Council and its way of functioning effectively and its planned service provision within the community for a prolonged period of time. In January 2021, the UK Covid alert level was set at level 5 (maximum) and has altered but since 28th January 2022 this has been reduced to level 0 [<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/covid-19-alert-level>]

Terrorism:

Many countries worldwide (including the UK) constantly monitor and subsequently assess their risk as a result of terrorism. Currently (February 2022) the threat to the UK from international threats is substantial as is the threat to Great Britain from Northern Ireland related terrorism [<https://www.mi5.gov.uk/threatlevels>].

A terrorism related risk could affect the community in a broad range from the catastrophic (i.e. loss of life and the destruction of infrastructure) to the inconvenient and disturbing (i.e. the discovery of terrorism propaganda within the community).

Political Risks:

Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council is a local council with members elected periodically by the electors of Nantyglo & Blaina. Many of the decisions taken by the Council are *political* in that they are debated in council – which is a public arena – and having taken a decision ensuring that action will follow. The usual motivating factors are a desire to help groups and organisations and to present the image of Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council in the best possible light. As a group, the members also work to improve the quality of life for all of the residents. One of the political risks is a change in the political complexion of Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council. An alternative political group/ party may have a fundamentally different agenda with consequences for the services that Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council supplies to the public *free of charge*.

Economic Risks:

Whilst the Council holds no shares, it does however have a loan (payable to the Public Works Loan Board) in respect of the purchase of Salem Chapel. The main economic risk to the Town Council is the maintenance and running costs associated with Salem Chapel, a grade II listed building. At the present time the Town Council is only too aware of the serious financial risk posed by Salem Chapel which requires a substantial amount of work owing to dry rot infestation. Its listed building status complicates and adds further financial pressures and risk to the Town Council. A structural survey (December 2015) also highlighted substantial roof repairs are required within the next few years. The Town Council can only attempt to limit further damage by carrying out the recommended repairs (using a suitably qualified tradesperson together with a competent and indemnified project manager) following a realistic building maintenance plan for Salem Chapel. It must be emphasised that the continued ownership of Salem Chapel together with possible future devolution of services to the Town Council may pose a substantial risk. The economic risk associated with Salem Chapel has been reported to and considered by Council in detail during 2018 due to the discovery of an unpaid gas bill. Please note that issues relating to this gas bill have now been resolved

Social Risks:

These are factors in relation as to how Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council applies its policies. The demographic situation in Nantyglo & Blaina indicates that the area is officially classed as a deprived area & has an ageing population and this needs to be reflected in the services/activities that Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council offers to its residents. Whilst in the past this may have impacted upon more in the Principal Authority, again with the possible future devolution of services to Town Councils, this may be considered a risk. Council should consider what policies it has in place against what it needs and correct the balance.

Technological Risk:

The risk to the Town Council could be caused by the failure or theft of its computer system. This could be caused by power surge or spike, theft or removal of the equipment. The risk is to the Council's ability to respond to this challenge by ensuring that essential files are protected or at least backed up. Other risks are viruses and worms that can devastate a

system. Additionally, a phishing 'blackmail' e-mail was received as a consequence of the e-mail account being hacked a number of years ago. The IT system, hardware and software has now been updated and professional IT support and security is ongoing which has greatly reduced the risk.

Legislative/Regulatory Risk:

Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council was set up under the terms of the Local Government Act 1972. In common with other areas of local government in England and Wales, Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council can only do those things that it is legally empowered to do.

Unless an action is specifically permitted it may not be done.

Acting against the law would be seen as an ultra vires action. The risk is that Members may wish to do something that they are not empowered to do and choose not to either seek or accept the Clerk's advice.

Unlawful financial decisions carry the risk of all Members being surcharged by External Audit if they act in an irresponsible manner. Under the terms of the Code of Conduct Members may also be suspended or even disbarred. Members of the Town Council are expected to act in a responsible manner at all times.

The number of legislation impinging upon local councils, their Members and officers increase each year. More and more legal tasks are being placed upon local councils who have limited resources to be able to respond. The relatively recent introduction of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) 2018 and the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 also impact upon all Town / Community Councils.

Whilst Town Council staff currently work part time hours, those legislative bodies which require response and action by Town Council expect that response in the same time constraints as given by larger Councils which are staffed full time.

Environmental Risk:

The Town Council adheres to all recycling procedures within its offices and all such recycling etc is dealt with by Blaina Community Institute Ltd & Blaenau Gwent CBC. Salem Chapel currently poses a greater risk due to the current outbreak of dry rot (which is under investigation) and safe removal of waste. Some of the Christmas lights which are owned by the Council are now in less than perfect condition and require replacing and updating. The Town Council has reduced its carbon footprint and increased its energy efficiency whilst reducing running costs by replacing such lights with more energy efficient lights with the current three-year plan to replace the Christmas lights with more energy efficient lights being actioned.

Customer/Citizen Risk:

The residents of Nantyglo & Blaina are Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council's customers and they are all citizens with rights – rights of access, rights of inspection of documents and rights to challenge Members at local elections, and the right to dissolve Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council. The risk of failure to provide comprehensive, up to date coverage of Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council's actions and informing the public at large of those actions has been alleviated by the information provided on the Town Council's website and

proposed Facebook page. Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council has identified publicity and distribution in its budget and will continue to keep the web site updated and has increased (& will continue to) its transparency and openness with the local electorate. Regular public consultation events and ongoing public consultation surveys also contribute to effective communication with the electorate of Nantyglo & Blaina.

Professional/ Managerial Risk:

This relates to the professionalism of the Council's staff.

Legislative changes, increased activity by both Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council and its involvement via the principal authority increase possible risk. The risks include giving incorrect advice, laying the Council open to public censure, failure to carry out properly authorised resolutions, failure to keep abreast of legislative changes that have or could have, an impact on the Members or the activities of Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council. The failure to keep the accounts of the organisation in the proper fashion, which is mitigated by the strong Financial Regulations and strong regime imposed by the Town Clerk/RFO. The appointment of the Assistant Officer has helped reduce the risks previously identified in having only one member of staff.

Partnership/ Contractual Risk:

Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council procures supplies and services in order to carry out its main aim of service to the public of Nantyglo & Blaina. The main risk is that supplies required may not be delivered on time, are not for purpose or are damaged or defective. The Council's main partnership exists with the principal authority.

The decision to purchase Salem Chapel in the town centre has meant that the Council has entered into a series of contractual responsibilities dealing with the many facets of maintenance and services. It is the Clerk's responsibility to ensure that all contracts meet the requirements of Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council. The risk is that this is simply not done. A partnership previously existed between the Town Council although this lease is currently (October 2018) being terminated via a formal deed of surrender (as requested by the Charter Group due to the unviability of both the group and the Chapel.

These then consist of the main risks, so far identified for Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council.

2. Risk Assessment:

Not all risk is present or imminent. They simply have to be addressed and assessed accordingly. All of the relevant literature suggests that risks can be categorised as high, medium or low dependent upon:

- a. History – has this risk ever happened?
- b. The potential for it happening – or happening again or
- c. Has not happened – yet.

Physical Risks:

Are tangible and although precautions are taken accidents will always happen.

Fire Risk:

The risk of a fire breaking out either through accident or deliberately is an ever-present risk but policies are in place that mitigates those risks.

Level: Medium

Justification: Blaina Institute – Fire alarm system in place, smoke alarms in all rooms, smoking forbidden within the building, accidental fires are unlikely at the present time. Members are reminded that Blaenau Gwent CBC and Blaina Community Institute Committee has responsibility for the building. Salem Chapel – no smoking premises with fire and smoke alarms in place.

Financial Risk:

The professional press frequently carry stories of Clerks and other staff who have spirited away sums of public money ranging from a few pounds to thousands of pounds.

Level: Low

Justification: Here at Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council a number of regulations and security checks are in place based upon the Financial Regulations of Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council. The first is that no cash payments are made. All cash income is banked intact. Secondly payment is by cheque drawn on the Council's account at the local bank against invoice. All cheques have two signatories. All cheques sent are returned by the bank with the monthly statement and are kept safely in a file with the corresponding invoices in a lockable cupboard. The actual day to day accounts work is done by the Town Clerk/RFO. The balance at bank and the bank statement are reconciled on a regular basis and reported to the Council. Council also receive a quarterly budget against actual expenditure report at the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting. The Internal Auditor visits on a half yearly basis as a minimum and reports his findings to the Council. These are tight, robust and effective controls.

Liability:

As a public body, Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council is liable to be sued if anyone is injured by its actions – or inactions – of the staff or Members of Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council. In fact it may be argued that lack of action, which, can in extreme cases, amount to negligence – is more likely than any actions undertaken by staff or Members. The main occasions when such liability might occur is at functions organised by the Town Council such as The ARC Awards, Primary Talent Showcase, School Christmas Carol concerts, the Christmas Fun Nights and presentation evenings. The staffing of such events are carried out by staff and Members of the Council and are fully risk assessed by staff. Weekly inspection checks are undertaken by the Town Clerk at Salem Chapel and are reported to the Town Council on a monthly basis. Salem Chapel is currently closed to the public, although the physical condition of the public might pose a very real risk to the public. Members of the Town Council are covered by the Town Council's insurance for 'low level' litter picking and outdoor events subject to a risk assessment.

Level: High

Justification: Events held are covered by the Town Council's liability insurance and the Town Council's policies although the physical condition of Salem Chapel continues to pose a very real concern.

Security:

The Town Council offices relocated (July 2017) to Blaina Institute in Blaina and security of the building is the responsibility of Blaenau Gwent CBC and Blaina Community Institute Ltd and the security staff & measures deployed. However the ownership and insurance of the artefacts within the offices remain the responsibility of the Town Council. The office door has been fitted with a coded security lock which is used during periods of lone working. Locks have been fitted to both the office and chamber doors (storeroom was already lockable and secure).

Level: Medium

Justification: The level has been raised from low to medium due to the building benefitting from partial CCTV throughout and not having external gates which are locked at night and on bank holidays etc have proved effective security over recent years at the previous location (ICC building).

Salem Chapel – As previously stated security will always be a risk particularly when the Chapel is unmanned. An effective security and fire alarm together with weekly inspections helps lower the risk as does the fact that the Chapel is located in a prominent position within the High Street.

Level: High

Justification: An un-manned building leaves it vulnerable to acts of vandalism and attempted break-ins which has happened in the past.

Health and Safety:

Health and Safety legislations places a responsibility upon Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council as employers to ensure a good working environment for their staff. The employees have a duty of care both to themselves and their colleagues, which means not putting themselves at risk of harm. Health and Safety considerations also apply when members of the public visit the building. The recruitment of an additional member has helped to mitigate the risks of lone working and the level of strain currently experienced by the Town Clerk / RFO as the sole member of staff.

Level: Medium

Justification: Health and Safety Legislation is mandatory and directly applicable to Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council. The ramifications of the legislation are wide ranging.

Serious Public Health Risk/Pandemic (including Covid 19):

The emergence of the worldwide Covid 19 pandemic is arguably the most serious health threat to the UK in many decades. The legislation in respect of Covid 19 places responsibilities upon both individuals and employers (amongst others) to help maintain both personal, local and national safety. The Town Council, staff and Members have all adhered

to the wide range and frequently changing legislation, advice and best practise relating to Covid 19 whilst still maintaining service provision of the Town Council as far as possible. Such requirements are constantly monitored and are acted upon, usually at virtually no notice. There have been many effects of the pandemic upon the Council in terms of the way it has operated and the frequent changes in legislation (remote working, remote meetings, no council/community events etc) to other challenges being identified such as banking and IT issues.

Level: High

Justification: The ongoing worldwide Covid 19 pandemic is currently at level 0 with far fewer restrictions and social distancing in place. The apparent unpredictable and sudden changes (as seen in December 2020 and 2021) in the pandemic further adds to the possible changes in risk level although the successful UK wide vaccination program has further reduced the risk. The Town Council will continue to adhere to all legislation and advice whilst continuing with maintaining service provisions as far as restrictions allow.

Salem Chapel – Although Salem Chapel is currently closed (due to dry rot), a weekly inspection of Salem Chapel is undertaken by the Town Clerk which is then reported to the Town Council on a monthly basis. The fabric of the building due to dry rot poses a risk for any member of staff, member of the council or trade person needing to access the building.

Level: High

Justification: The Town Council actively enforces and reports upon all health and safety aspects of Salem Chapel although it must be acknowledged that the ownership of such a facility will always incur a certain level of risk which has increased due to the physical condition caused by dry rot. This risk was further evidenced by a part of the kitchen floor breaking when walked upon by a Member of the Council in October 2018.

Terrorism – Currently (February 2022) the threat to the UK from international threats and the threat to Great Britain from Northern Ireland related terrorism is both substantial [<https://www.mi5.gov.uk/threat-levels>]. A terrorism related risk could affect the community in a broad range from the catastrophic (i.e. loss of life and the destruction of buildings and infrastructure) to the inconvenient and disturbing (i.e. the discovery of terrorism propaganda within the community).

Level: Low to Medium

Justification: Currently Nantyglo & Blaina (as Blaenau Gwent) is sufficiently removed from major cities and other areas (e.g. large sporting arenas, concert halls or airports etc.) which may be more likely to be targeted. Additionally Nantyglo & Blaina has a higher than the UK average, percentage of residents who were born (and lived most of their lives) within the area which also lessens the risk (although it cannot be excluded totally). Such risks can and would alter depending upon inflammatory issues. Any risk from terrorism within the locality is likely to be classed as a lower risk such as a result of propaganda.

Political Risks:

Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council is a publicly elected body and as such the public are entitled to change their representatives.

Level: Currently High

Justification: The closer one gets to an election the higher the political risk (the next elections are to take place in May 2022). A change of political complexion can have substantial ramifications such as reducing the precept and stopping ongoing projects or substantially increasing the precept to fund ambitious projects. The possibility of the proposed mergers for Borough Councils as suggested in the Draft Local Government (Wales) Bill and the future potential changes relating to the scope of the work of Town Council and their possible future mergers leaves Council with unknown political consequences, an uncertain future. The probability of boundary changes proposed for Blaenau Gwent (as previously reported to Council) and the proposed alteration of the Nantyglo / Brynmawr boundary is one example of this.

Economic Risks:

The main economic risk to the Town Council is its ownership of Salem Chapel. The Chapel was purchased in 2000 with a loan from the Public Works Load Board, which it is still repaying at the agreed rate. Since its purchase the Chapel was extensively renovated with funding from a variety of sources including the Town Council itself, however, the Chapel has been plagued by maintenance issues ever since. The discovery of extensive dry rot within the main hall has made it necessary to close the Chapel to the public. Investigations by a structural surveyor and architect has confirmed that the dry rot is partly due to the blockage of air vents during extensive renovations in 2010/11 and that listed buildings consent is required to remedy the situation. Further repairs to the roof are also required within the next few years.

Ongoing cuts to the principal authority budget may also mean that the devolvement of services to the Town Council may increase with associated costs to the Town Council budget.

Level: High

If the dry rot is left untreated, current legislation means that the principal authority can serve notice on the Town Council making it a legal requirement to carry out the work (although in practise this is unlikely to happen). The current condition and limited useable space within the Chapel means it has limited income opportunities although removal of the pews within the main hall of the Chapel (with relevant listed buildings consent) would increase the viability of the Chapel. This and the remedial works (including architect and listed buildings consent fees) required in addition to usual maintenance and repairs due to possible vandalism means that the chapel poses a considerable financial risk to the Town Council. Another option available to the Council is to sell the building.

Social Risks:

Although still categorised as a deprived area and with an increasingly ageing population the

main impact for services will fall on the Principal Authority. However, the possible devolution of services may impact on the Town Council budget.

It is important to remember that “social media” is a growing influence on daily life. The perception and reputation of the Council can be damaged in a millisecond by an ill-judged or worded “post” or by entering into any argument on the Web. It must be remembered that although sometimes anonymous, each Councillor and the Council have a duty to uphold the Code of Conduct at all times. The adoption by Council of “Social Media: A guide for Councillors” has been taken to assist Members to mitigate the potential risk posed by the use of the various forms of social media.

Level: High

Justification: As above most of the risk will be to Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council as the Principal Authority, but possible devolution of services has to be taken into account. Regular reminders and / or training for Members regarding appropriate use of social media also helps to reduce any possible social risk of this nature. Negative social media comments posted by members of the public and others during December 2021 resulted in much adverse publicity for the Town Council.

Technological Risk:

The risk to this equipment is either from external factors such as fire or power surges or from theft either of the microchips or the whole system.

The term “technological” may also take into account possible risk from social media. The Town Council’s overhauled the IT system, IT support and equipment in September 2021 and these have proved vital in the Town Council’s staff being able to work remotely during the Covid 19 pandemic.

Level: Medium

Justification: The Town Council has purchased professional laptops & monitors etc for staff to use both in the office and at home if necessary. The professional set up of the new IT system and equipment together with the provision of professional IT support & security has lowered the technological risk. Members are aware of the inherent dangers of the internet. The ongoing Covid 19 pandemic has also meant that staff need to be able to work from home for long periods of time which the purchase of the two laptop computers have proved invaluable.

Legislative/ Regulatory Risk:

Legislation affecting local government seems to be increasing, particularly when local councils are being drawn into the net being cast for the big players e.g. the Principal Authorities. Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council has a staff running into hundreds. Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council has a staff of two part-timers, yet the legislative/ regulatory demands are the same.

The Clerk is responsible for keeping up to date on all legislative changes. These can come from the Welsh Assembly Government, the UK Government and even the European

Commission and the Parliament in Brussels. Together with information received from OVV and the SLCC, this can be a very time-consuming process and due regard has to be given to the importance of this part of the governance of Council.

The Town Council has implemented a General Data Protection Regulation (2018) policy which is adhered to and the requirements of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 has also impacted upon the Town Council.

Level: High

Justification: Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council is a body set up by statute, governed by statute and statutory instruments. The law has to be complied with at all times. The Clerk as the Council's "first aid" legal officer is obliged to inform and warn council of impending or actual legal change.

Environmental Risk:

As a public body Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council is in a highly visible position whereby all of its actions are scrutinised. As such it needs to be exemplary in its environmental concerns and Members of the Town Council are pro-active in helping to maintain the local community via litter picks, weed clearing and re-cycling together with its biodiversity plan.

Level: Low

Justification: To maintain policies which comply with current and new regulations. The Town Council has provided a number of flower planters throughout both Nantyglo and Blaina together with a 'Butterfly Garden' located in each area. The Council has also embarked on a programme of renewing the Christmas Lights from the old 'light bulb' style to the much more energy efficient LED lights.

Customer/ Citizen Risk:

The risk to Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council relates to the provisions in the Local Government Act 1972 which allow a majority of at least 30% of the local electorate or 300 electors taking part in a referendum to abolish the Town Council which is why the Town Council needs to be seen as pro-active and not just an additional cost to the council-tax payer. The Council takes this risk extremely seriously.

Level: Very High

Justification: It is fact that there will always be some of the electorate who do not support the Town Council. With community asset transfer and the emergence of pro-active community groups it is possible that such an attempt to hold a referendum may arise at any time. Recent mis-communications with the public and Blaenau Gwent Ward Members at Christmas time illustrated the need for the Town Council to have a louder public voice and effective form of advertising (an official Council Facebook page is being considered).

Professional / Managerial Risk:

The Town Clerk acts as a manager, administrator and is also the legal officer of first recourse for the Town Council. The Town Clerk is also the appointed Responsible Finance Officer and signs off the accounts and manages the financial element. The Town Clerk prepares and circulates agendas for meetings together with supporting documentation. The

Town Clerk attends the meetings of the Council (and other meetings) and records the decision as part of the Minutes. Additional training for staff and Members is available and all Members and staff are made aware of current courses available.

In 2014, the then Town Clerk suffered a serious illness which led to him being on sick leave for several months. The Town Council was fortunate in that the Assistant Town Clerk was able (and as previously resolved at previous Town Council Meetings) to act as Town Clerk and provide the Town Council with continuity due to her experience and knowledge. However, this was a period whereby the Town Council suffered from a staff shortage and work was prioritised accordingly. The present Town Clerk / RFO has over 25 years' experience within Local Government and has attained Advanced Qualified Clerk status as a result of attaining the University of Gloucester's Local Policy qualification in addition to other professional qualifications such as Association of Accounting Technicians and the Institute of Leadership and Management. The Town Clerk / RFO have continued with her ongoing professional development such as completing OVW's Advanced Finance training in March 2016.

The Town Council has had serious issues with the resolution of staffing issues, although this has now resolved. The Town Council has been in a position whereby it needed to fulfil its planned programme of events and other statutory duties with a reduction in the number of staff. Council have learned from previous situations by trying to provide support to the remaining staff but whilst being mindful of the distinction between their remit as Councillors and staff's remit as Officers of the Council – crossing this line could have serious ramifications for the Council. The necessity of utilising Salem Chapel (if a decision was taken to renovate the building to a usable condition) to its fullest potential requires a large proportion of time and past experience has shown that this is not something that can be successfully achieved with current staff levels. It is vital to continue to monitor and have a suitable action plan in place in case of such an occurrence in the future so as to avoid a situation whereby there is a need to undertake restricted duties due to a lack of staff, skills/knowledge and how to mitigate the impact on both the Town Council's activities and its' remaining staff's (and Members) wellbeing.

Level: Medium to High

Justification: Although the current Town Clerk/RFO and Assistant Officer are both sufficiently qualified and experienced any absence or replacement of either member of staff impacts upon the fundamental basic knowledge of the Council's policies and good practice and would reduce the level of the Council's staff. Ongoing professional development is also vital (for staff and Members) to continue to administer and direct the Town Council in line with ever changing and challenging legislation, requirements and situations as is membership of appropriate bodies such as One Voice Wales. The ownership of Salem Chapel would also require adequate staffing resources for it to be utilised as appropriate.

Partnership/ Contractual:

The Town Council has a number of partnership agreements and contractual which relate to the supply of materials and services. No payment is made in cash; payment is only made against invoices which are checked twice by the Town Clerk/RFO. The invoices are

presented to Council on a monthly basis for inspection/query. The Internal Auditor scrutinises these on a random basis during his visits.

Level: Medium

Justification: Such arrangements may increase pending any decisions on the future devolution of services.

3. Risk Management

The Advice Note of the SLCC (AG8/2003) states:

There are three main ways of managing risk:

- Take out insurance
- Work with another party to reduce risk or
- Manage the risk yourself to Council's satisfaction.

Governance and Accountability in Local Councils in England and Wales (NALC & SLCC, ND 2002) Indicates areas where insurance can help manage risk:

- The protection of physical assets owned by Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council – furniture, equipment, Salem Chapel etc (as detailed in the Asset Register).
- The risk of damage to third party property, or individuals as a consequence of the Council providing services or amenities to the public (public liability).
- Risk of consequential loss of income or the need to provide essential services following critical damage, loss or non-performance by a third party (consequential loss).
- Loss of cash through theft or dishonesty (fidelity guarantee).
- Legal liability as a consequence of asset ownership (public liability). (Ibid.p.30)

The insurance cover is reviewed annually to ensure that it is adequate for the Council's needs.

Certain areas of risk are not manageable only by insurance. As an example Professional/ Managerial Risk. This being managed through staff development, staff appraisals and training.

Security at Salem Chapel is managed by a fire detection & alarm system both of which are professionally inspected annually in addition to weekly inspection visits by staff and appropriate policies in place.

Reputation:

Reputation is another uninsurable risk, it is nevertheless an asset that the Council squanders at its peril (*Larkin vii 2003*). Reputation is built on trust and belief – it cannot be bought. There are, however, a number of principles that underpin reputation risk management, they are:

- Acknowledge that reputation is a valuable asset and needs to be actively managed at Council level.
- Develop finely tuned radar and become a listening Council.

- Ensure as practically as possible, that each ward within the area receives the same consideration and services.
- Design clear and robust management systems that integrate with routine risk management processes.
- Adhere to the Code of Conduct and assure your licence to operate.
- Treat your stakeholders intelligently.
- Work as if everything you say and do is in the public domain.
- A requirement that the Council be pro-active, publicise itself and work positively and accurately.
- The Council to work together for the benefit of the community which it serves.

Reputation is a value judgement of the attributes of an organisation and is usually built up over time. Paradoxically it can be destroyed very rapidly. Some of the factors that put reputation at risk are:

- Security failure.
- Service shortfall (particularly in the Nantyglo Ward although services/events have increased here more recently).
- Competitor targeting.
- Bad behaviour.
- Unfair employment practice.
- Damage to health, safety or the environment.
- Inconsistency in policies and practice.
- Poor governance /ethics.
- Regulatory intervention.
- Adverse stakeholder perception.

At the end of the day, Members are ultimately responsible for risk management because risks threaten a Council's ability to achieve its objectives. It is the Clerk's responsibility to ensure that Members should:

- Identify the key risks facing the Council.
- Evaluate the potential to the Council of one of these risks taking place, and
- Agree measures to avoid reduce or control the risk and its consequences.

It is important to remember that "social media" is a growing influence on daily life. The perception and reputation of the Council can be damaged in a millisecond by an ill-judged or worded "post" or by entering into any argument on the Web. It must be remembered that although sometimes anonymous each Councillor and the Council have a duty to uphold the Code of Conduct at all times. All Members are issued with a copy of the Welsh Government's Social Media: A Guide for Councillors together with a copy of the Seven Principles of Public Life.

In conclusion it must be recognised that this document is a working paper and, in accordance with good practice, will be revised and updated on an annual basis.

Management of risk is something that affects us all and which we can affect too.

4. Summary of Contingency Plans:

Contingency planning is the pre-planning steps to be taken if a risk occurs. It ensures that there is a plan for unforeseen events including

Fire & Security of Office:

All current documentation and that required to be retained by legislation is stored in metal cabinets and all electronic documents are backed up.

All staff and Members are aware of the fire procedures & emergency exits, which are reiterated during Council meetings.

The office, storeroom and Council Chamber doors are security coded and the office and storeroom are also lockable. All are fitted with fire doors.

A legal user agreement with Blaenau Gwent CBC is in place which ensures that that BGCBC would need to provide the Town Council with suitable accommodation in the event of emergency.

Adequate insurance in such an event is taken out and reviewed regularly.

Financial / Partnership / Contractual & Economic:

Adequate insurance is in place which indemnifies the Council in event of many financial risks. The robust and rigorous procedures in place together with an effective system of internal audit should ensure that any such risk is minimal.

Liability:

Any such liability incurred by the Town Council would hopefully be addressed via the precautions detailed above to ensure preventative action is taken. Adequate insurance is in place which should help protect the Town Council in the case of such events. Such insurance cover is reviewed regularly to ensure adequate cover is in place.

Political/ Social & Citizen Risk:

Political risks are notoriously difficult to plan and deal with for any government body. Whilst preventative measures are in place and all members are regularly updated, the Council needs to be visibly pro-active in the community at all times, acting in the best interests and representing the community and the people via continual consultation in a variety of ways and methods (effective PR needs to be constantly and consistently practised). The Town Council promotes and publicises its activities and is transparent and open in all its activities and decisions although it is apparent that a more efficient method of doing so is required. Evidence of this is retained by the Council and utilised if required. The Town Council would need to issue swift, efficient, far reaching and above all honest communication / press release in such circumstances. Trusted contacts in many organisations (e.g. local AM, MP, BGCBC, local groups and organisations and other public bodies) would help in such circumstances. The anticipated creation and adoption of a realistic, beneficial and practical Council Action Plan would also contribute to a contingency plan. A well managed social media presence such a Facebook can also assist with this although extreme care is required as such a presence can act as a 'double-edged sword' for the Town Council.

Technological Risks:

Since the Council has purchased additional laptops, IT system and security, the associated risk has lessened. The council's IT provider (Orbits IT) runs weekly security checks on the Council's IT systems and also provides much needed ongoing professional IT support.

Legislative / Regulatory Risk:

Whilst both the staff and members of the Council actively keep informed and up to date of changes together with careful monitoring and reporting of necessary information at regular Council meetings, there will always be an associated risk. The Council has up to date membership of both One Voice Wales (OVW) and the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) which entitles the Council to much help and advice that might well be required in the event of such risk occurring. Additionally, the Council has many contacts with specific skills within both the public and private sector that can be contacted for specialised advice and help.

Professional / Managerial Risk:

Whilst many of the risks previously associated with this have now been mitigated by the appointment of a well-qualified Assistant Officer, there will always be an ongoing risk with qualified and experienced staff leaving. In order to minimise such a risk, it is advisable that the Personnel Committee prepares a report recommending that if the position of Assistant Officer (or equivalent) becomes vacant, then this position be advertised as soon as practical. It is also advisable that this be reviewed on an annual basis.

Emergencies / Terrorism:

Whilst it is very unlikely that the above would affect our area, emergencies can and do happen. The Civil Contingencies Team at Blaenau Gwent aim to reduce the chances of emergencies happening, and if they do, lessen the impact on our communities through planning; training and exercising; liaison and response.

Please click on the following link for more information:

<https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/en/resident/emergencies-crime-prevention/planning-for-and-responding-to-emergencies/>

Health and Safety:

This is a wide area which is covered by a wide range of legislation. Risk assessments are carried out on a regular basis. Other risks are avoided and minimised where possible by both officers and members by adhering to the appropriate advice, legislation, guidance and risk assessments. The council also has adequate insurance which would provide adequate indemnity in the event of many such circumstances.

Serious Public Health Risk/ Pandemic/ Covid 19:

At the present time (February 2022), the pandemic is still ongoing although Wales is classed at being alert level 0 with few restrictions and social distancing still in place. Many events are now able to go ahead although risk assessments are still required. At the current

time and meetings of the council can only be held in person if the Council can also hold the meeting by remote means. It is anticipated that this system will be operational in March 2022. The Council has a successful method of holding meetings via remote means which enables all members and members of the press and public to attend without any cost to the individual or the need for any equipment other than a telephone or computer. Council staff have needed to work from home intermittently as restrictions have dictated, to keep the Council's services functioning although there had previously been some challenges due to IT systems (now resolved). The Council has now implemented online banking which has enabled some payments to be made where cheque payments are no longer accepted.

Salem Chapel:

At the present time there are many risks associated with the ownership of Salem Chapel such as health and safety, financial, political, liability etc. Due to the present situation the Council is carefully identifying and considering each possible risk, then assessing and putting procedures in place to manage those risks. A public consultation took place in March 2021 and the Council is now in the process of working through several legal issues. In the event of many of the risks identified, adequate insurance is in place, and this is continually monitored to ensure the insurance is fit for purpose. Advice and current information is also provided and requested from the insurance company to ensure it is current. Members of the Council are regularly updated on all issues in respect of Salem Chapel and recommendations are actioned.

Tracy Hughes
Town Clerk /RFO
Revised: February 2022