

MERLINS BRIDGE COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Minutes of Meeting 17th November 2021 at 7pm, online via the Zoom videoconferencing platform

Present: Cllrs. John Cole, Alison Palmer, Queenie Thomas, Janice Morgan, Mary Owen, Nick Stamp, Hilliard Studley, Lisa O'Sullivan; Peter Horton (Clerk).

Apologies

C'lr. Paul Davies.

Declaration of known interests

C'lr John Cole declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the agenda item to discuss his possible breach of the Members' Code of Conduct.

Approval of minutes of October 2021 monthly meeting

These were approved by Members, and retained by the Clerk for signature by the Chairman following the meeting (proposer C'lr John Cole, seconder C'lr Jan. Morgan).

Approval of minutes of E.G.M. held on 27th October 2021

These were approved by Members, and retained by the Clerk for signature by the Chairman following the meeting (proposer C'lr Lisa O'Sullivan, seconder C'lr Hilliard Studley).

Matters arising

Christmas cards. Members were informed that the school competition and arrangements for the printing of cards was in hand. Details of the quotation for the printing would be circulated to Members when available.

Community Carol Service. C'lr Alison Palmer had spoken to the pastor of Emmanuel Mission Church, who had confirmed his availability for the Carol Service scheduled for 6-15pm on Wednesday 8th December. Members were informed that coffee and mince pies would be arranged for afterwards.

Zebra crossing. Thanks to given to C'lr John Cole for cleaning the lights at the zebra crossing, which was appreciated by Members.

Plans

Applications

No applications for consideration this month

Consents issued (for information)

21/0625/PA - Use of distillery to allow for ancillary sales / tasting area (partly in retrospect); Site Address: Cinnamon Grove, Old Hakin Road, MERLINS BRIDGE, Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire, SA61 1XG

Correspondence

- 1) C'lr John Cole – Notice of intention to call a referendum on the abolition of the Community Council – dealt with in agenda item below.
- 2) Mr & Mrs Michelle and Ian Lewis – Expression of regret at not having been co-opted – noted.
- 3) Mrs. Veronica James – Query on reasons for non-co-option – dealt with in agenda item below.

4) St. Mark's School – Request for donation towards school activities – Members resolved to send a donation of £200 to the school to support purchase of equipment, aprons, gloves, etc., for their activities in the new polytunnel. Formal approval dealt with in 'Accounts' below. C'llr Lisa O'Sullivan asked about providing funding for some refreshments for the children in the school going to the pantomime. C'llr Alison Palmer undertook to ask at the school about what might be viewed as appropriate in this regard.

5) C'llr Paul Davies – message via Clerk to express his view that the matter of co-option of new members should not be re-visited at this time – dealt with in agenda item 'Discussion of arrangements for filling open council vacancies' below. C'llr John Cole queried whether or not it was acceptable for such opinions from absent members to be read out and taken account of in meetings. The Clerk advised that there was no objection to this, and it was common practice for members who were expecting to miss a meeting to pass comments and information in advance for the benefit of members in attendance.

Accounts (to include payments for approval, monthly accounts report)

Payments

C'llr John Cole (reimbursement, plants for Remembrance Day) : £15-98

Payment approved by Members (proposer C'llr Queenie Thomas, seconder C'llr Jan. Morgan).

Donations

Royal British Legion : £ 50

St. Mark's School (donation) : £200

The above donations were approved by Members (proposer C'llr John Cole, seconder C'llr Lisa O'Sullivan).

Monthly accounts statement (effective October 31st 2021)

Total expenditure in financial year to October 31st : £10444-04

Total income in financial year to October 31st 2021 : £ 6926-71

Total funds on hand on October 31st 2021 (all accounts) : £23650-03

Precept for 2022/23

Consideration of precept for next financial year to be considered in December meeting, with Clerk providing draft budget and figures in advance to inform the discussion.

County Councillor's report

Highways repairs on Pembroke Road outside cheese factory. C'llr John Cole reported that the needed repairs had been carried out on a recent Saturday, and to a good standard of workmanship.

Highway-related improvements. It was reported that C'llrs Paul Davies, Nick Stamp and John Cole had met with Ms. Clare Williams of P.C.C. to look at a variety of issues. PD / JC / NS had met with Clare Williams. Various points had been mentioned, including the following :

Zebra Crossing. Alterations to the crossing, such as raising the crossing to slow traffic and draw more attention to it, was mentioned as a possibility.

Speed-activated signage. Possible funding under the Community Works grant application scheme had been mentioned as a possibility. However, the Clerk informed Members that this fund was now closed to bids for 2021.

Clerk to seek prices for a solar-activated sign for outside the Rugby Club in readiness for consideration at the December meeting. C'llr Nick Stamp mentioned

that trees encroaching on the potential sign location would need trimming back to enable solar panels to function properly.

C’Ilr Nick Stamp mentioned that a further sign had also been discussed with Clare Williams, to be situated on land a few metres south of the cobblers on the left-hand side of the Pembroke Road going up. It was understood that progressing this sign would need P.C.C. Highways involvement.

Signage, Clay Lane. C’Ilr Mary Owen mentioned that the road signage coming into the Village from Clay Lane was currently obscured by growth. C’Ilr John Cole undertook to look at this.

New Local Development Plan. C’Ilr John Cole mentioned that the plan was now available to view on the P.C.C. website.

Discussion of arrangements for filling open council vacancies

C’Ilr John Cole mentioned to Members that he had reported Members to the Ombudsman for alleged discriminatory behaviour in relation to their decision not to co-opt on some applicants to the Council, while accepting some others. C’Ilr Alison Palmer commented that the decision had been legally made.

It was resolved to defer all further discussion on the matter of how to proceed in relation to filling the open vacancies for consideration at the December meeting (proposer C’Ilr Jan. Morgan, seconder C’Ilr Mary Owen). In the meantime, Clerk to send a holding response to Veronica James to let her know that the matter will be discussed next month, and a substantive reply sent to her following the December meeting.

Discussion of possible breach of Members’ code of conduct by C’Ilr Cole

C’Ilr John Cole asked for details of the breach alleged. It was explained that this related to concerns over a possible breach of Section 6(1)(a) of the Code in relation to recent Facebook postings made on 28th October 2021.

[NOTE – Prior to substantive discussion on the agenda item, C’Ilr John Cole left the meeting]

Members resolved to hold the rest of the discussion in private session (proposer C’Ilr Lisa O’Sullivan, seconder C’Ilr Hilliard Studley).

[NOTE – following the resolution to hold the remainder of the agenda item in private session, the members of the public present in the meeting were placed into the meeting waiting room].

Advice received from the Acting Monitoring Officer was reviewed by Members. Following discussion, it was resolved to report the potential breach of the Members’ Code of Conduct to the Public Services Ombudsman in relation to the recent Facebook postings made by C’Ilr John Cole (proposer C’Ilr Lisa O’Sullivan, seconder C’Ilr Nick Stamp). Clerk to make arrangements accordingly.

[NOTE – at this point, C’Ilr John Cole re-entered the meeting, and members of the public were re-admitted to the meeting]

Discussion of arrangements for improved road signage / markings along main road

Covered in ‘County Councillor’s report’ above.

Discussion of / report on Armed Forces Covenant (tabled by C’Ilr Cole)

Deferred for consideration at a future meeting.

Discussion of formation of Children’s Committee (tabled by C’Ilr Cole)

Deferred for consideration at a future meeting.

Discussion of protocol for Members taking forward matters on behalf of Council (tabled by C’Ilr Cole)

Deferred for consideration at a future meeting.

Discussion of possible need for Social Media policy (tabled by C’Ilr O’Sullivan)

Deferred for consideration at a future meeting.

Discussion of Community Council grant scheme proposal (tabled by C’Ilr O’Sullivan)

Deferred for consideration at a future meeting.

Discussion of future meeting arrangements in the light of recent / updated Welsh Government guidance on multi-location meeting requirement

C’Ilr Nick Stamp informed Members that he had been in discussion with C’Ilr Paul Davies about the matter. Discussions had been held with an I.T. consultant, who had advised that a conference calling arrangement, with a suitable microphone plugged directly into the laptop computer would be suitable, and only cost around £30 - £50. C’Ilr Stamp wanted this pursued as soon as possible.

C’Ilr John Cole informed Members that the Welfare Hall was no longer available on Wednesday evenings for Community Council meetings during the winter months, due to other bookings made.

C’Ilr Alison Palmer had spoken with officers in Haverfordwest Town Council, who had said they could not currently hold face to face meetings due to the lack of facilities to meet the requirements of the new legislation.

Other potential venues that were mentioned, but not discussed in detail, included the Rugby Club, Boxing Club, The Glen, and the Cheese Factory. It was left for Members to put out feelers regarding possible alternative meeting venues, for further consideration in December. In the meantime, it was confirmed that the December meeting would again be held on Zoom.

Any other business

There was no other business.

Next meeting

Wednesday 15th December 2021 at 7pm.

The meeting was closed at 8-50pm.