

## MERLINS BRIDGE COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Minutes of Meeting 12<sup>th</sup> January 2022 at 7pm, online via the Zoom  
videoconferencing platform

**Present:** Cllrs. John Cole, Mary Owen, Hilliard Studley, Nick Stamp, Alison Palmer, Queenie Thomas, Janice Morgan, Paul Davies, Veronica James, Michelle Lewis; Peter Horton (Clerk).

The Chairman welcomed C'llrs Michelle Lewis and Veronica James to their first meeting following their co-option in December.

### **Apologies**

None

### **Declaration of known interests**

None

### **Approval of minutes of December 2021 monthly meeting**

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

### **Matters arising**

**Speed-activated sign quotation.** C'llr John Cole had received a quotation for a speed-activated sign, to be considered by the Council. The other further quotations had been chased up by the Clerk, but not yet received. As only two quotations were, therefore, currently available, Members deferred the matter for further consideration in February. It was confirmed that replacement of the non-functioning sign outside the Rugby Club would be a straight like-for-like replacement, with no involvement needed from P.C.C. However, the new sign proposed for the lower end of the Pembroke Road would need input from the P.C.C. Highways Department.

**Growth obscuring signage, Clay Lane.** C'llr John Cole confirmed that the matter was in hand with P.C.C. He mentioned that as the signs were set back quite far from the road, considerable trimming of the hedges was necessary to restore visibility. C'llr Jan. Morgan mentioned that some of the signs were very dirty, with work needed to clean them up.

**Zebra crossing lights.** C'llr John Cole informed Members that replacement of the non-functioning led lights was in hand with P.C.C.

**Social media policy.** To be placed on the agenda for further consideration in February.

**Councillors acting on behalf of the Council.** C'llr John Cole made reference to the June 2021 minute record, which recorded the Council's decision to appoint C'llrs Paul Davies and Nick Stamp to represent them in taking forward Highway-related matters with P.C.C. A discussion ensued regarding whether or not C'llr Paul Davies' actions in discussing such matters with officers from P.C.C. in advance of that meeting had been proper or not. Differing views were expressed, with the Chairman eventually encouraging Members to take on board any lessons learned and move on.

## **Plans**

### **Planning consents granted**

**21/0823/PA** - Change of use from scrapyard (sui generis) to B2 or B8 storage compound (re-using existing shed / workshop); Site Address: Scrap Yard, Magdalene Street, MERLINS BRIDGE, Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire, SA61 1JJ

## **Correspondence**

- 01) Lisa O'Sullivan – notification of renewal notice for Fasthosts – Members were happy to retain the subscription. Clerk to make arrangements accordingly.
- 02) John Cole – request for financial assistance for Welfare Committee – It was explained by C'llr Cole that the funds were needed for the cost of inspection and repairs / maintenance of play equipment. Members asked for a breakdown of the costs involved. C'llr John Cole undertook to obtain and provide this before the next meeting. Matter to be placed on agenda for discussion in February.
- 03) John Cole – quotation for speed-activated sign – dealt with in 'Matters arising' above.
- 04) Residents of DeClare Court – letter of thanks for Christmas cards – noted with appreciation, and thanks to C'llr Jan. Morgan for arranging the delivery of the cards.

## **Accounts**

### **Payments**

Information Commissioner (registration renewal)	: £ 40-00
Queenie Thomas (Member allowance 20/21, & Oct. '21 – Mar. 22)	: £ 225-00
Veronica James (Member allowance Dec '21 – Mar '22)	: £ 50-00
Janice Morgan (Member allowance Oct. '21 – Mar. '22)	: £ 75-00

The above payments were approved by Members (proposer C'llr Mary Owen, seconder C'llr John Cole).

### **Monthly accounts statement (effective December 31<sup>st</sup> 2021)**

Total expenditure in financial year to December 31 <sup>st</sup>	: £13158-45
Total income in financial year to December 31 <sup>st</sup>	: £10259-84
Funds on hand on December 31 <sup>st</sup> (current account)	: £17410-34
Funds on hand on December 31 <sup>st</sup> (deposit account)	: £ 8075-31

### **Internal auditor appointment for 2021/22 accounts**

Members agreed to appoint the same internal auditor as for the 2020/21 accounts the previous year (proposer C'llr Mary Owen, seconder C'llr Veronica James).

## **County Councillor's report**

**Pembroke Road.** Members were informed that the road was scheduled to have some maintenance work carried out in either 2021 or 2022.

**24 hour road closure.** Members were informed of a scheduled temporary road closure in the vicinity of Haylett Grange later in the month, with diversions in place.

**Litter in public places.** C'llr Mary Owen raised this as an ongoing concern, with a request for C'llr John Cole to raise it in County Hall, with a request for litter-picking to be carried out. C'llr John Cole explained that in similar situations, the Authority had declined to take action, as this was not a statutory duty.

**Non-functioning streetlights.** C'llr Mary Owen mentioned a number of lights being out of action in the community. C'llr John Cole mentioned that these had been reported, and were scheduled for repair / replacement.

### **Annual review of Clerk's pay and conditions**

Members approved the increase in hourly pay rate for the Clerk to 10% above scale point 20 of the N.J.C. pay scale for part-time Clerks, to bring his pay rate into line with the other councils that employed him, this to become effective from April 1<sup>st</sup> 2022 (proposer C'llr John Cole, seconder C'llr Michelle Lewis). Clerk to arrange to amend the contract of employment accordingly, in conjunction with the Chairman. All other terms and conditions of employment to remain unamended.

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

Members discussed possible venues in the event that the Welfare Hall continued to be unavailable once meetings returned to a physical location. Those mentioned included Emmanuel Mission Church, and the Rugby Club, and St. Mark's School. Regarding necessary equipment, in addition to reasonable broadband provision, some kind of omni-directional microphone was regarded as a necessity, as well as a loudspeaker and possibly a monitor for viewing / hearing of remote participants by those present in the hall.

Clerk to check the legality of meetings being held in licensed premises if the bars were closed.

C'llr Paul Davies expressed the view that the Council should try to move on with making arrangements regarding equipment and venue, to facilitate a resumption of physical meetings as soon as possible.

Members agreed for C'llr Paul Davies to make enquiries at the Rugby Club and Emmanuel Mission Church venues, to check on their suitability / availability for meetings. Matter to be placed on February agenda for further discussion.

### **Discussion of effective advertisement of future community events**

Members noted that the recent Carol Service had been very poorly attended, and were agreed that future events would need to be much better publicised. It was acknowledged that the level of attendance could have been partly due to fear over Covid, but Members did not feel that this was sufficient to explain it. The possible use of banners and posters to advertise future events was suggested. Social media was also mentioned as a potentially valuable means of reaching some sections of the community. Some Members felt that, while this could be a good option to consider, it would need to be very carefully monitored and administered. It was confirmed that this would be discussed further in the February meeting as a stand-alone agenda item. C'llr Jan. Morgan also mentioned that a revival of the community newsletter could be worth considering.

### **Review / discussion of current open vacancies on Council**

The Clerk informed Members that revised guidance had been received from the Elections Office, confirming that vacancies now open could be either filled by co-option, or held open until the election scheduled for May 2022, at the Council's discretion.

Members voted to co-opt Mr. Ian Lewis as a Member (proposer C'llr John Cole, seconder C'llr Mary Owen). Clerk to contact Mr. Lewis to formally invite him onto the Council, and to complete the necessary administrative formalities.

[NOTE – C'llr Michelle Lewis declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the co-option, as the wife of Mr. Lewis, and left the meeting during discussion / voting on the co-option].

### **Discussion of events in connection with Queen's Platinum Jubilee**

Members noted the four-day long weekend set aside by the Government for the Platinum Jubilee celebrations, and were in favour of supporting events to mark the event in the community. C'llr John Cole mentioned that the Welfare Committee was looking at organising something similar to the event held for the Diamond Jubilee, with a possible party in the park being arranged. He mentioned that they would be discussing the matter further in their next meeting in February.

C'llr Jan. Morgan felt it would be good to wait for the outcome of the Welfare Committee meeting, and then consider ways to support their proposals. C'llr Mary Owen was in agreement with this, but felt that any support should go beyond financial support, and include a contribution of time and effort in planning and executing the events. Various members present offered support to assist with any arrangements made. C'llr Mary Owen mentioned a possible tea party for elderly residents. Members were in favour of this idea. C'llr Alison Palmer undertook to contact DeClare Court to enquire about any events they may already have planned. C'llr Mary Owen suggested possibly involving children from the school in a joint event with the elderly residents, as a cross-generational celebration of the Jubilee. Members who were prepared to be involved were encouraged to message C'llr John Cole directly. Clerk to inform all members of this, so that absent Members would be aware of this.

Matter to be placed on February agenda for further discussion.

[NOTE – C'llrs Nick Stamp, Hilliard Studley and Paul Davies left the meeting with apologies at this point].

### **Discussion of requirements of Local Government and Elections (Wales) 2021 legal requirements due to become effective in April 2022**

The following requirements were discussed :

- Training plan – to be considered at the first convenient opportunity following the forthcoming scheduled election in May, when the makeup of the new council would be known. Members noted that the requirement to have a training plan in place would become effective in November 2022.
- Annual report – Clerk to draft up an initial report to present to Members, in advance of the requirement to publish as soon as practicable after April 1<sup>st</sup> 2022.
- Public representation – Members discussed the need to facilitate public representation on agenda items tabled for discussion, this to become effective from May 2022. Matter to be tabled for further discussion in February, to enable Members to consider ways of approaching this requirement in the meantime. Clerk to inform absent Members of the discussion that had occurred, and invite their consideration of the matter in advance of the February meeting.

[NOTE – C'llr Queenie Thomas left the meeting at this point with apologies].

### **Any other business**

There was no other business this month.

### **Next meeting**

Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> February 2022 at 7pm.

The meeting was closed at 8-55pm.