

## ABERGAVENNY TOWN COUNCIL

### MINUTES OF THE POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD 8<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2021 7PM ON MS TEAMS

**Present:** Cllr M Groucutt (Chair)  
Cllr T Konieczny  
Cllr M Harris  
Cllr R Harris  
Cllr G Jones  
Cllr T Thomas  
Cllr M A Brocklesby  
Cllr S Burch  
Cllr N Tatam  
Cllr T Davies  
Cllr F Morgan  
Cllr M Hickman  
Cllr P Simcock  
Cllr D Simcock

#### **Absent without apologies**

None.

#### **In attendance:**

S Rosser (Town Clerk)

No public session

No public in attendance

PR 21/21	<b>Receive and approve apologies for absence</b>  Apologies were received from Cllr L Van de Vyver, and it was resolved to accept the reasons for absence.
PR 22/21	<b>Receive Declarations of Interest</b>  Cllr S Burch declared an interest in PR24/21 as she is an employee of Gateway Credit Union.
PR 23/21	<b>To approve the minutes from 13th October 2021 and 10th November 2021.</b>  Minutes from 13 <sup>th</sup> October 2021 – Cllr G Jones moved to accept and approve the minutes – all in favour. Minutes from 10 <sup>th</sup> November 2021 – PR13/21: Cllr N Tatam would like the actual number of electorates to be checked and this updated on the minutes. Town Clerk is in the process of checking the figures to include those from Llanwenarth Citra to properly reflect numbers going into the election. So far Cllr Tatam has calculated that we currently have 8350 estimated electorate, which affects the

	<p>group we sit in according to the Remuneration Report. If this figure is accurate, we will fall into Group 3 – up to 9999 electorate. If the numbers are between 10000 – 13999, we move to Group 2, so clarity on exact numbers is needed to establish expenditure.</p> <p>PR16/21: Recorded words not accurate. Cllr Tatam would like the words ‘overly’ added in before ‘lengthy report’. Statement after this is not reflective of the meaning he was trying to get across in the meeting about ongoing commitments and the effect on the precept and would like the opportunity to have these changed. Cllr Groucutt wasn’t present at the meeting but offered to speak to Cllr Tatam about rewording the paragraph and to come to an agreement with the Clerk over the wording.</p> <p>Cllr Groucutt moved to accept the minutes once the minor alterations have been made to PR13/21 and PR16/21. Majority approved.</p>
PR 24/21	<p><b>To receive a report on updating signatories on the Gateway Credit Union account.</b></p> <p>Report received and accepted from the Town Clerk on updating the signatories to the Gateway Credit Union account to remove the previous Town Clerk and add the current Town Clerk. Reconfirmed the Chair and Vice Chair of Policy and Resources Committee to remain as signatories as per original agreement. Councillors all voted to approve this update.</p>
PR 25/21	<p><b>To receive a report on a 3-year year-end agreement with Rialtas.</b></p> <p>Report received and accepted from the Town Clerk. Cllr T Konieczny said that the recent move to Rialtas with the previous Town Clerk had proved to be much more efficient than the previous provider. It would make sense to take up the offer of the three-year service for the year end accounts and make use of the discount being offered. Cllr Groucutt asked if the consensus would be to take advantage of the three-year agreement on offer. All councillors in favour. Town Clerk to arrange with Rialtas to take up the three-year agreement.</p>
PR 26/21	<p><b>To receive and note the Town Clerk’s update and report.</b></p> <p>Town Clerk’s report received and noted.</p> <p>Councillors in agreement to invite Cllr Holland from Llanwenarth Citra to attend the next Policy and Resources and Full Council Meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2022.</p> <p>Reindeer issues: Cllr R Harris commented on how disgusted he was that the vandalism had happened. If it has been vandalised again, we need to let the public know about the call out costs we incur. Proposed we arrange for one further call out. Cllr T Thomas took a call from business owner Chris Jones on Nevill Street at 5pm today informing him the reindeer was now completely unlit. The reindeer is an attraction for their ‘Reindeer Quarter’ on St Johns Square and Nevill Street, and it is annoying that something that has brought pleasure to many has been damaged – it’s very sad to see. We can’t afford £462 every call out. Not comfortable with escalating costs from a precept payer’s point of view. Cllr S Burch commented it was very unfortunate that the vandalisers had</p>

not been caught on CCTV and questioned the effectiveness of the CCTV in that location, querying if we should have something more at ground level. Cllr M Harris responded as this has already been raised; on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> December 2021 a walk about with Gwent Police, MCC officers Andrew Mason and John Crandon (ASB Officers), Cllr T Thomas and Cllr M Harris, and the Town Clerk, took place to look at and discuss ongoing issues which is where this was raised. The problem in this location is the trees. CCTV was down town-wide after power cables were severed at the works site up at the Leisure Centre, and this was fixed within a few weeks. The Christmas Lights are now causing glare on some of the CCTV in town. With regard to St Johns Square, trees planted when the square was refurbished have now grown to a point where their branches are obscuring the view of the square from the camera angle on the opposite side of the road. Tree pruning is scheduled to be carried out to increase the effectiveness of the camera for this area. It's a conundrum to have cameras where they should be useful, but circumstances mean that they aren't effective. The Police commented that perpetrators of the graffiti and vandalism tend to be well covered – i.e. hats, hoods, gloves, jackets – but they are always hopeful they can identify them in other ways should they be wearing something distinctive or unique. The value of success is not always seen with so many cameras in town, and we do need more coordination when putting up flags, banners, lights, etc.

Cllr T Konieczny is not in favour of spending any further monies on getting the reindeer repaired. There is no guarantee that it won't get vandalised again. We need to check our liabilities with the contractor regarding vandalism. Town Clerk will speak to SparkX to clarify this. Cllr Brocklesby stated that even if the contract is flexible, we should look to draw a line under it.

Cllr R Harris proposed a motion to repair the reindeer once more. In view of what the Clerk has said, it would be worth waiting to see what the engineer says as they have to come out to see to other issues with the lights in the town.

Cllr G Jones thinks we should vote on repairing the reindeer once more. Cllr Jones has spoken to the Police on a number of occasions regarding the CCTV issues. The reindeer has been an attraction county-wide, so let's make a commitment now so we know what we are in for.

Motion proposed to pay for one more call-out by Cllr G Jones, seconded by Cllr T Thomas. Cllr Thomas also commented that we should carry out one more repair for the sake of residents and visitors to the town.

Cllr MA Brocklesby asked for a point of information to be checked first – to check the cost of the call out in advance so we have a top figure of £462 maximum for any repair and call out. Cllr G Jones, T Thomas agreed to amend the motion to reflect this.

Vote: In favour: 10, Against: 1, Abstain: 2.

Councillors noted that if we cannot leave the reindeer in place unlit for health and safety reasons that it may have to be removed.

Christmas Meal: Cllr T Thomas asked if the admin officer can check to see whether we can cancel the meal booked for the 15<sup>th</sup> December and get any monies back that have been paid. Cllr R Harris added this would be on the assumption we can't go next week, or can we postpone and go another time? Cllr MA Brocklesby noted the latest statement from the Prime Minister had little

	<p>bearing on Coronavirus regulations in Wales, we should wait to see what happens after Friday's announcement by the First Minister, or postpone until the New Year, keep ourselves safe but still support local businesses. Cllr T Konieczny commented we shouldn't cancel but look to move the meal into January/February 2022 to give a chance to see how the pandemic is progressing – it makes sense to postpone. Cllr G Jones – although not attending the meal, the Welsh Government review is on Friday, so anyone attending may need a covid passport to attend pubs and restaurants from next week. Majority in favour of looking to postpone the meal – Town Clerk to ask Admin Officer to action.</p>
PR 27/21	<p><b>To receive a report on the draft budget.</b></p> <p>Cllr M Groucutt explained there is a proposed increase in spending, costs are increasing, wages will increase once the percentage has been agreed with unions, etc. There was no rise last year, and the Council has moved forward considerably in how we serve our community.</p> <p>Cllr S Burch thanked those that had put together the budget but couldn't replicate the figures reached to give the percentage increase suggested and asked for the calculations to be provided at the next meeting in January 2022.</p> <p>Cllr M Hickman said the 5% suggested rise is above the rate of inflation, and £1.45 per week increase on a band D property isn't a true reflection of the effect on people as there aren't many band D properties in Abergavenny. Cllr Hickman requested a recorded vote.</p> <p>Cllr R Harris stated we are currently looking at draft proposals and thanked those who had put effort into the draft report. We must look at the direction we're moving in and can't commit to a percentage increase yet. Happy to work through calculations with Clerk.</p> <p>Cllr T Konieczny reminded councillors that they have kept the precept at the same level for the last two years. There have been several changes in expenses incurred with services delivered in the town. Dog bin collections jumped unexpectedly by 56% this year, for instance. Inflation is predicted to be greater than 5% by January 2022. When the draft is proposed we looked at the same level of service provision and all additional costs going forward. We have spent the budget and will have very little underspend - £7000 approximately. A new council may have ambitious plans going forward or may want to build on reserves. We have the second lowest precept in the county. Demands from the new ward of Llanwenarth Citra may bring a little more in, but we are likely to have more going out than coming in from there. By not increasing the precept we now need to bring up our current value.</p> <p>Cllr G Jones said the draft £481K budget is a good reflection of what's needed. Over the 5-year term we have time and time again taken on MCC services. We still have no SLA with MCC for the toilet provision in the town. We've taken on the street sweeping and implemented the Town Team – we had no choice as people of the town deserve these services to continue being delivered.</p> <p>Cllr S Burch raised a point of information, asking when will we have figures showing the effect on income of Llanwenarth Citra joining Abergavenny? Clerk advised this will hopefully be known next month.</p> <p>Cllr M Groucutt proposed a motion to accept the draft budget:</p>

	<p>Approve: Cllrs P &amp; D Simcock, R &amp; M Harris, T Davies, G Jones, MA Brocklesby, S Burch, T Thomas, T Konieczny, M Groucutt</p> <p>Against: Cllrs M Hickman, N Tatam</p> <p>Abstain: Cllr F Morgan</p> <p>Recorded vote: 11 for, 2 against, 1 abstain.</p>
PR 28/21	<p><b>To receive and note recent payments made in Month 8.</b></p> <p>Cllr T Konieczny said our global spend across the budget is progressing as we would assume it to. Several headings however are out of kilter, and we need to get our house in order. We will need to vire money to put this right. The Environment Committee has a significant overspend in the Abergavenny in Bloom heading which indicates that some expenditure has found its way into this heading that may have been due to the £15k grant money from the Local Places for Nature funding received (nature leaflet, plantings in Tudor and Castle Street car parks etc), yet the £27k in the heading for the implementation of the action plan is not touched. Suggests working with the Clerk to get the headings sorted and put right before the internal audit takes place.</p> <p>Cllr G Jones recommended deferment of looking at Month 8 in detail until January 2022 to allow Cllr Konieczny and the Clerk to sort through the budget headings. All approved.</p>
PR 29/21	<p><b>Report from Councillors attendance at external bodies which are relevant to this Committee.</b></p> <p>Cllr M Groucutt had attended a meeting with MIND Monmouthshire; our funding agreement is due to end in March 2022 so Cllr Groucutt would like to invite Chris Bowie to come and talk to ATC at the next meeting to show what a difference ATC's financial support has made to their service delivery so we can look at renewing the agreement going forward, as this will need to be approved by ATC in order to look at agreeing the renewal of this agreement for further funding.</p> <p>Cllr M Harris had attended the walk-about to discuss the CCTV provision in town on Monday evening as referred to in PR26/21. MCC ASB officers have extended an invitation to Councillors to attend the CCTV Control Room in order to gain a better understanding of how the system works.</p>
PR 30/21	<p><b>Items for consideration at the next meeting 12<sup>th</sup> January 2022.</b></p> <p>Invitation to be extended to Cllr C Holland of Llanwenarth Citra to attend a future council meeting.</p>

**Meeting ended 8:14pm**

**APPROVED AS A TRUE RECORD**

**CHAIRMAN ..... DATE .....**