

LLANVACHES COMMUNITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD AT LLANVACHES CHURCH HALL TUESDAY 18 OCTOBER 2011

Present	Councillors	Tony Rex Andy Harcombe Kay James Lyndon Jones Jenny Scully Sally Thomas
Apolgies for Absence		Roger George
Public Attendance		9

2096 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (20 September 2011)

Cllr Lyndon Jones proposed that the circulated minutes be accepted as a true record. This was seconded by Cllr Andy Harcombe and agreed unanimously.

2097 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None declared.

2098 COMMENT FROM THE CHAIRMAN

The Chairman reminded Council that the Birchfield Right of Way was a difficult subject to discuss because Cllrs knew Simon and Sarah George and there is a high level of emotion about the subject. At this point there was the first of many interruptions from the residents present. The Chairman said that Cllrs must take care to reach dispassionate conclusions and not be influenced by sympathy for those involved.

2099 MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES

2077(ii) Good Councillor Guide. The Clerk reported that copies of the Good Councillor Guide would arrive shortly for distribution to Cllrs Andy Harcombe and Sally Thomas.

2091(i) Village Green Notice Board. Cllr Tony Rex requested that the Clerk arrange for the notice board posts to be repaired as soon as possible. Mr John Wood was asked about the repair and said that he would need help from 2 others to complete the work. Cllr Andy Harcombe volunteered. The Chairman told Mr Wood that if he had any doubts about the safety of the operation, he must stop and Council would use a contractor for the repair.

2093(ii) Financial Regulations: Cllr Tony Rex said that we must assume that Cllr Roger George had submitted the Annual Return and 2010-11 Accounts for audit.

2094(i) Grit Bins: The Clerk has spoken to NCC about refilling the grit bins before the cold weather. NCC has issued a Request Reference Number and will carry out the task soon. The Clerk will progress the request.

2100 COUNCIL MANAGEMENT MATTERS

(i) Newport CC Planning Online. Cllr Tony Rex stated that the practice of sending Planning Application documents around to each Councillor for consideration was slow and inefficient. All these data (and more) are available on the Newport Planning Online site. So, Cllrs will now be asked to examine new applications online prior to comment by email. The timescale for comment is usually too short for discussion of applications at Council Meetings but all applications will be covered under the Planning Matters heading.

(ii) Date of Next Meeting : The next meeting was due on 20 December 2011. Because this date is in Christmas week, the Chairman suggested that the meeting should take place earlier in the month. After discussion, the favoured dates were 15 December or 6 December. The Clerk will check availability of the Church Hall and inform Cllrs about the date chosen.

2101 MATTERS OF LOCAL INTEREST OR CONCERN

(i) Prize for Best Kept Village 2011. Cllr Tony Rex told the meeting that a Chepstow Garden Centre voucher for £25 was the prize for the Highly Commended award. He suggested that the voucher be passed to Cllr Kay James to buy plants, bulbs and compost for the Village Green garden. Council agreed.

(ii) Churchyard Grants: Cllr Tony Rex said that the amount of grant for churchyard maintenance at the Tabernacle Chapel and St Dubritius Church should be decided. He explained that the Concurrent Grant for maintenance of burial grounds from NCC was about £100 but Council had budgeted to donate £240 by adding some money from the Precept. Cllr Andy Harcombe proposed that £120 be granted to Tabernacle Chapel and £120 to St Dubritius Church. The motion was seconded by Cllr Jenny Scully and agreed unanimously.

(iii) Gilfach Triangle. The Clerk reported that a new picnic bench had been installed on the Gilfach Triangle and the Bench Seat would be restored soon. Cllr Tony Rex said that he had found wet, unreadable, old notices fixed to the Bench Seat on Gilfach Triangle by drawing pins. He commented that the Notice Board was a few yards away and said that this low level vandalism and fly-posting must cease. A resident, Mrs Monica Randall, said she had posted the notices, and had been doing so for the 20 years, because the notice board was difficult to view. A lengthy discussion took place between residents and Council. Cllr Sally Thomas volunteered to investigate the adverse comments about the notice boards and present observations at the next meeting.

(iv) Community Renewable Energy. Cllr Sally Thomas said she had talked to Welsh Water for some background on this matter and would report back at a future meeting.

(v) Community Council's Emergency Plans. Cllr Sally Thomas argued that the Community Council should have a set of formal plans to deal with severe weather conditions and like emergencies. Council expressed general agreement. Cllr Tony Rex commented that the Newport Map indicated the NCC Gritting Route ended at the corner of Rectory Road and Wentwood Drive. He asked the Clerk to contact Newport CC with the purpose of extending the route to include Lower Millbrook.

(vi) Gray Hill Surgery PPG Report. Cllr Tony Rex had nothing specific to report. A resident, Mrs Connolley, asked that her gratitude for the excellent care her husband had received be conveyed to the next PPG Meeting.

(vii) Community First Report. Our representative, Mr John Wood, said that the Management Group was about to meet and it was expected that funding for community projects would be made available again, therefore, it would be prudent to make requests. Cllr Sally Thomas suggested that the Queen's Golden Jubilee Celebrations should be a candidate to receive some funding.

(viii) Website Report. Cllr Andy Harcombe reminded residents that if they had any historical information or photographs that would be of interest, they would be welcomed.

2102 PLAYING FIELD MATTERS .

(i) Inspection Report. The Clerk said that no additional faults had been seen.

(ii) Grass Cutting. The Clerk reported receipt of the first invoice from NCC for grass and hedge cutting. She went on to inform Council that the agreed schedule had been completed and the last cut took place in September. The Chairman observed that as a result of an extended growing season another cut would be necessary. Cllr Kay James proposed, and Cllr Andy Harcombe seconded, a motion that the Clerk should order another cut of the playing fields at a cost of up to £90. Cllrs agreed and asked that the work be done within 2-3 weeks.

(iii) Recreation Field Gate Repairs. The Clerk reminded Council that quotes had been received for the replacement of one post and re-hanging of the gate and that the task had been given to WM Garden Services. She said that in the absence of Cllr Roger George, she was unable to say whether the order had been placed. The Chairman asked the Clerk to ensure that the replacement post would be suitable for the new gate when it was purchased. A resident interjected stating his opinion that the gate should not be replaced. The Chairman stated that the decision had been taken and further debate was out-of-order. The resident pressed his view and forced discussion.

For the Record : At the June 2011 meeting Cllrs decided unanimously that a new gate will be purchased - more quotes were needed. At the September meeting it was decided that the existing gate would be rehung as an interim measure to resolve the immediate problems.

(iv) Playing Field Zip Wire. The Chairman asked the Clerk to update Council about the Zip Wire repairs needed to satisfy the Annual Inspection findings. The Clerk said that the original installer expressed no interest in the maintenance task but she had obtained quotations from WM Garden Services and Designer Parks. Cllr Andy Harcombe proposed that Designer Parks be awarded the order to carry out the tension and matting repairs at a cost of £260. The motion was seconded by Cllr Jenny Scully and agreed unanimously.

A resident, Mr Ken Morgan, asked that the questions raised by him in 2007 about the Zip Wire position be re-examined. The Chairman ruled that it was not a subject for this meeting. The resident continued at length saying that the installation layout plans were substandard and the Zip Wire was installed closer to his property than had been agreed. He asked

Council to move the lower tower to the promised position and he expressed disappointment about insufficient consultation and promises not being kept. No answer was given.

2103 PLANNING MATTERS

11/0653 Construction of Garage : Converted Barn nr Hillside Cottage – still under consideration

11/0679 Installation of Photovoltaic Panels : Reservoir House – refused, mainly on the ground that the design represented a visual intrusion and urbanisation of countryside.

11/0833 Creation of New Access Track : Converted Barn nr Hillside Cottage – Cllr Lyndon Jones reported that work had taken place on the new access track and the illegal gate was being used. The Chairman said that 11/0833 had been refused. Cllr Jenny Scully observed that work on the construction of the garage base appeared to be well advanced although the application had not yet been determined.

11/1026 Remove Single Garage and Erect Double Garage : The Cayo – no objection

2104 FINANCIAL MATTERS

Cllr Tony Rex said that in the absence of Cllr Roger George neither **Payment of Accounts**, nor analysis of the **Performance to Date v Budget 2011-12** could be discussed.

2105 CORRESPONDENCE

The Clerk reported that Langstone Community Council had asked Council for support on a proposal to obtain a fairer allocation of the Concurrent Grant. Amongst others, distribution on a per head or per household basis had been tabled by Newport Finance Dept, The Chairman circulated copies of an Excel printout showing analysis of these and other potential methods. Cllr Andy Harcombe observed that there were no clear trends and the spreadsheet looked like random numbers. Council agreed that the Clerk should inform Langstone CC that we cannot support distribution on per Elector, per Household or per Tax Base Household and we would ask NCC to revisit the original principles for the Concurrent Grant in order to generate a fair basis for distribution. However, we would support an interim 'one off' increase for Langstone.

2106 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(i) Parking at Tabernacle Chapel. Cllr Lyndon Jones pointed out that 'perpendicular parking' on the verge adjacent to the A48 at Tabernacle Chapel was again taking place and the practice restricted vision onto main road from Tabernacle Lane. Cllr Tony Rex said he would speak to Mrs Ann George who is a Chapel Elder.

(ii) Recreation Field Northern Boundary Hedges. A resident, Mr Ken Morgan, said that he had heard that Council intended to erect a fence on the boundary between the Recreation Field and his property, and he complained that he had not been consulted. Cllr Tony Rex said that after comment about the sparseness of the northern hedge, the provision of a 'Pig Wire' style fence was discussed at the April Council Meeting. In answer to a question, the Chairman insisted that the whole hedge had gaps. Cllr Rex continued by saying that the plan was shelved without decision and would be reviewed later this year when the growth might have resolved the security issue. He added that when the matter had been reviewed, the residents concerned would be notified if a fence was to be installed.

For the Record : The Chairman inspected the hedge shortly after the meeting and then told Mr Morgan that the hedge on his property appeared to be sound.

2107 BIRCHFIELD RIGHT OF WAY

Cllr Tony Rex opened the last section of the Agenda by saying that this matter had not progressed since the letter sent to Mr and Mrs Simon George in July 2009. He reminded the meeting that Council had decided unanimously in 2007 that two exits from the Recreation Field were required and that whoever bought Birchfield would be asked to reopen the Right of Way. He asked for comments from the Cllrs who had joined since February 2007.

The said Cllrs were prevented from immediate response by a stream of interruptions from a group of residents. The topics ranged through (a) doubts about the veracity of facts that were stated in Land Registry documents and in the Lease for the field (b) demands for wider consultation with residents on the proposed changes (c) demands for more detailed arguments about the need for a second exit (d) the viability of a 12ft wide access-way.

In answer to a specific question on why Ty Maen had not been included, Cllr Rex said that Council had no argument about the Right of Way through Ty Maen because it was already open and in constant use. Mrs Connolley, who lives at Ty Maen, disagreed and claimed that there were a number of issues to be considered. Cllr Andy Harcombe emphasized that the

Right of Way through Ty Maen and Birchfield was not a public right of way and if reopened it could only be used with the authorisation of the Community Council.

Cllr Kay James said that there had been no change in any of the circumstances since 2007 and the original resolution must stand. Cllr Andy Harcombe asked why the matter was being debated if the decision had already been made. Cllr Tony Rex replied that the matter was being raised again to allow comment from 'new' Cllrs on the previously agreed need for an emergency evacuation route and to assess more recent consideration of an escape route for threatened children.

Residents again prevented the meeting moving forward and Cllr Rex then demanded that Cllrs be allowed to speak without interruption and that one of the motions stated on the briefing papers should be put. He added that he was minded to concentrate on Option (b) which reaffirmed the 2007 resolution. *For the Record : the 2007 resolution was confirmed unanimously in the Closed Session on 21 October 2008.*

Cllr Lyndon Jones confirmed that his view was unchanged and the Right of Way must be re-opened to cope with any emergency that might occur when the field was in use. Cllr Sally Thomas remarked that she had read the background papers and listened to arguments but could not reach a firm conclusion and would therefore abstain. Cllr Jenny Scully indicated that she reluctantly accepted the arguments for a second exit but could not support the motion because her view was that the objectives should be reached by discussion and compromise. Consequently, she would abstain. Cllr Kay James firmly stated her support for a reaffirmation of the 2007 resolution and reminded Council that in the event of a major incident, our insurers might find us culpable if we specifically allowed the Right of Way to remain closed. Cllr James added that if found culpable, individual Cllrs could be surcharged by a large amount. Cllr Andy Harcombe said that he accepted the principle of a second exit but he could see neither the need nor practicality of a 12ft wide access and he was uncertain about the exact terms of the legal documents and correspondence with NCC. Cllr Harcombe continued by saying that with these doubts in mind he must abstain but he would lobby strongly for discussions with Mr and Mrs Simon George before any letter was sent. The Chairman replied that he would follow the pattern established in 2009 which would go some way to answering the expressed wishes.

The motion then proposed by Cllr Tony Rex and seconded by Cllr Lyndon Jones was that Council agrees that the motion passed unanimously on 20 February 2007 be re-affirmed and that another letter be written to Mr & Mrs Simon George requiring the Right of Way be re-instated and this letter will be progressed if within 6 weeks no reply is received.

The motion was accepted by 3 votes to Nil with 3 abstentions.

Further interruptions followed the vote. The Chairman ruled that the matter was closed and there would be no further discussion. Cllr Kay James suggested that Council return to the former system of resident participation where there was a controlled Open Forum of 10-15 minutes at the end or the mid-point of the Council Meeting. She added that this had been a very difficult meeting through residents failing to follow basic meeting disciplines and forcing discussion of extra items and circular debate of subjects. Cllr Tony Rex said that he believed that the process that had developed over several years had significant democratic advantages.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 9.45 pm and said that Cllr James' suggestion about participation would be discussed at the December Meeting.

Date of Next Meeting Tuesday 6th December 2011 at 7.00 p.m.