

LLANVACHES COMMUNITY COUNCIL

DRAFT MINUTES OF MEETING HELD AT LLANVACHES CHURCH HALL TUESDAY 6 DECEMBER 2011

Present	Councillors	Tony Rex Andy Harcombe Roger George Kay James Lyndon Jones Sally Thomas
In Attendance	Ward Councillor	David Atwell
Apologies for Absence	Councillor	Jenny Scully
Public Attendance		5

2108 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None declared.

2109 COUNCIL MANAGEMENT MATTERS

Residents' Participation in Meetings : Cllr Tony Rex told the meeting that in view of Cllr Kay James' suggestion and various comments since the Community Council Meeting on 18 October 2011, he had decided that Council must debate the participation of Residents in Council Meetings. An e-mail containing the following opinions had been sent to all Cllrs. The meeting in October suffered very frequent interruptions from a few members of the public who ignored generally accepted basic meeting protocols. Residents have the right to attend Council Meetings (except when confidential matters are to be discussed) but they do not have the right to speak at the meeting. The opportunity to speak throughout our Council Meetings is a privilege granted by custom and practice. One Voice Wales and the NCC Monitoring Officer recommend a *Fixed Period* style of public involvement, although they do not forbid *Open Access*, they strongly discourage it.

Previously, the *Open Access* approach, with residents participating by invitation throughout the meeting, has been mainly successful. Residents have 'had their say' and Cllrs have gained information for decision making. Cllr Rex said that he favoured *Open Access* over *Fixed Input* because in round terms it is more democratic and gives advantages to both sides of the house. However, when the privileges associated with *Open Access* are abused and residents refuse to accept the most basic disciplines of meetings, democracy and good governance is lost. He added that it was clear that a well defined process was needed. Consequently, Cllr Rex had published a proposed Standing Order entitled *Public Participation in Council Meetings* to all Cllrs. He pointed out that Clauses 1-6 were almost identical to the OVW recommendations but he had added Clause 7 to enable Cllrs to propose *Open Access* for specific subjects on an agenda.

After short debate, Cllr Andy Harcombe proposed that the Standing Order be accepted and used immediately; the motion was seconded by Cllr Sally Thomas and agreed unanimously.

2110 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (18 October 2011)

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

2111 MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES

2077(ii) Good Councillor Guide : The Clerk reported that copies had now been received for distribution to Cllrs Andy Harcombe and Sally Thomas.

2091 (i) Village Green Notice Board : The timber posts supporting the notice board have rotted at ground level. Cllrs agreed that these posts should be replaced with concrete posts clad with wood. Mr John Wood, helped by Cllr Andy Harcombe and Mr Brian James, will do the work.

2094 (i) Grit Bins : The Clerk will progress the provision and filling of bins and report back at the next meeting.

2101 (iii) Gilfach Triangle : Cllr Sally Thomas observed that there was limited visibility at the present location of the Notice Board which could be improved by moving it to the other side of the green. Cllr Roger George said that currently there was good access for residents to stop and read any notice on the board. Cllr Sally Thomas said she had not obtained local opinion about the location. It was decided that the Clerk would obtain the cost of moving the board and if re-siting appeared viable, a consensus of local opinion would be sought.

2105 Correspondence : Cllr Tony Rex referred to Langstone Community Council's proposal to obtain a fairer allocation of the Concurrent Grant. He added that the issue would be discussed at the Liaison Meeting on 8 December and we plan to support a one-off special increase for 2012-13 but ask for a fundamental review for the years thereafter. Ward Cllr David Atwell said that there was very little chance of any change for this year.

2106(i) Parking at Tabernacle Chapel : Cllr Roger George reported that he had raised the matter and a notice is now displayed in the Chapel reminding drivers not to park on the grass close to the A48.

Cllr Sally Thomas said that there was a regular obstruction around 7.30-8.00am at the Rock and Fountain Bus Stop. Ward Cllr David Atwell agreed to ask the police to review this.

2112 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.

(i) Birchfield Right of Way : In response to comment, the Chairman opened the Public Participation Period by saying that the Birchfield Right of Way was not on the Agenda and therefore would not be discussed. Mrs Liz Williams said that Council were planning the removal of trees near the boundary of her property to achieve a 12ft RoW and she asked whether she would be consulted. Cllr Tony Rex stated that Mrs Williams would be consulted if removal of the said trees became part of the RoW reinstatement action.

(ii) Posting of Notices at Gilfach : Mr Paul Cooper was informed that his letter (on behalf of the Parochial Church Council) could not be considered at this meeting because it had only been received by the Clerk on the previous day. The Chairman said that Council had a strict 48hr Rule to enable Cllrs to receive and consider papers etc relevant to Agenda Items. Mr Cooper pressed the point that the letter asked for Mrs Monica Randall to be exonerated from criticism by Council for the posting of notices on the bench at Gilfach. The Chairman again stated that the letter could not be considered until the next meeting in February and Mr Cooper expressed very critical opinions about Council's methods and the Chairman, citing as an example the reaction to a bonfire started by his son-in-law. Mr Clive Bevan interjected saying that some residents did not recognise the hard work done by Cllrs who cover a wide range of demands and issues from members of the public, utilities and local government departments. He added that he sensed that the majority opinion was that 'Council did a very good job, sometimes in difficult circumstances'. Mrs Margot Rex supported Mr Bevan and said that most people did not appreciate that there was an immense amount of research behind Cllrs' responses to topics, questions and problems.

The Chairman announced that Cllr Andy Harcombe and he would meet with Mr Cooper to discuss the issues in his letter, later in December.

2113 MATTERS OF LOCAL INTEREST OR CONCERN

(i) Community Council's Emergency Plan : Cllr Tony Rex said that he agreed with Cllr Sally Thomas that the community should have well publicised plans to cover emergencies such as deep snow, flooding and high winds. The My Map section of the NCC website shows gritting routes and grit bin positions and the Clerk was tasked with contacting NCC and asking that the regular gritting route be extended to cover Lower Millbrook. Ward Cllr David Atwell reported that a request had been made for more grit bins in the area and reminded residents that the sand/salt in bins is not for private use. Cllr Rex said that several bins were not marked on My Map and asked the Clerk to try to get the map updated.

Cllr Sally Thomas suggested that tips on how to deal with weather crises should be published on our website along with emergency telephone numbers. She suggested that the website also listed volunteers who have vehicles that can deal with adverse conditions. Ward Cllr David Atwell suggested an article be published in Community First advising residents on best practice and helpful telephone numbers. Cllr Sally Thomas volunteered to prepare a short article. Ward Cllr David Atwell informed Council that any resident who needed sand bags to counter flooding, should phone 656656 and NCC would then deliver the bags. He reminded Cllrs that Welsh Water (not NCC) is responsible for sewage.

(ii) Gray Hill Surgery PPG Report : Cllr Tony Rex reported that there is a lot of opposition to the proposed incinerator in Llanwern. Also, there is concern about the closure of the minor injury service at Chepstow Hospital. He added that the Aneurin Bevan Trust's decision to remove the Physiotherapy Service from Gray Hill had been suspended to allow further

consultation. Cllr Rex relayed the view that as the facility for Consultants' Clinics had been withdrawn from Gray Hill, because other surgeries do not benefit from this service, it is likely that the Physiotherapy Service will be removed.

(iii) Community First Report : Ward Cllr David Atwell reported that Community First had sufficient funds for grants and that two had already been made. Cllr Tony Rex said that Llanvaches needed new playground equipment and a 'Jubilee Tree' replacement for the chestnut tree on the village green, so an application would be made for some support.

2114 PLAYING FIELD MATTERS.

(i) Inspection Report : Nothing to report

(ii) Recreation Field Gates : Council plan to install a 4ft wide gate at the side of the existing gate, to facilitate entry for adults with small children and a baby buggy. The work would entail removal of the disused stile, a dead tree and a short section of 'scrub hedge' near to the adjacent property. Cllr Roger George has consulted Mrs Monica Randall regarding the proposal. An initial quote suggests that the work will cost about £650 or £750. Cllr Tony Rex suggested that because this cost would exceed budget, the work should be delayed until the start of the next financial year. The delay was agreed but the Clerk was asked to obtain additional quotes, each detailed so that Council could decide whether to (a) reuse the existing gate (b) supply the gate(s) to the contractor

(iii) Football Field Lease Review : Cllr Tony Rex reminded Cllrs that the lease was due for renewal on 2 February 2012 and there was no indication that the rent would increase from the current £60pa, so, Council should decide now whether it wishes to continue the tenancy. Cllr Rex observed that the field is well used and is good value. All Cllrs supported continuation of the lease and Cllr Roger George, seconded by Cllr Sally Thomas, proposed that Council pay the invoice (up to £70) when received. Acceptance was unanimous.

(iv) Grass Cutting – Update. The Clerk had contacted NCC regarding an additional cut to the playing fields due to the warm weather conditions, but unfortunately they do not mow from October onwards because the equipment is stored.

(v) Zip-Wire Runway Maintenance. The Clerk will confirm the date that Designer Parks will carry out matting repairs and re-tensioning of the wire.

(vi) Recreation Field Boundary Hedges. The boundaries have been checked and all except the northern boundary with 2 Castle Rise are sound and stock proof. The same conclusion was reached in April but it was thought that the summer growth would 'bulk up' that hedge. Owners of the 2 properties to the north of the field have indicated that a clause in their deeds states that Newport BC will provide fencing on the boundary. But, Clause 2 in the Schedule of our Lease states that Council is responsible for provision and maintenance of all hedges, fences and gates.

The field was bought in late 1976 (negotiations started in 1974) by Newport Borough Council and the lease was offered to Llanvaches Community Council in February 1977. Cllrs refused to sign the lease because Council could not afford the cost of fencing almost the whole field. Eventually, in February 1982, there was a Site Meeting involving senior officers from the Chief Executive's Office, Parks Dept and Estates and it was agreed that NBC would provide the necessary fencing and Council was released from the obligation. This factor was confirmed in a letter dated January 1983. Cllr Tony Rex has asked NCC to remedy the deficient hedge on the boundary of 2 Castle Rise. Debate on responsibility is continuing because the lease was signed in January 1983 with Clause 2 intact.

2115 PLANNING MATTERS

11/0653 Construction of Garage : Converted Barn nr Hillside Cottage. Permission granted with conditions including that access must be as defined in the accepted plans.

11/0785 Various Alterations incl Solar Panels : The Hayloft, Whitebrook Barns. Granted with the proviso that the annexe must not become a separate dwelling.

11/1026 Remove Single Garage and Erect Double Garage : The Cayo . Granted.

11/1107 Installation of Larger Velux Windows : Mulberry Barn, Millbrook Lane. Council support the application

Council Processes. The practice has been for drawings and some application documents, which are supplied by the Planners, to be passed from Cllr to Cllr for comment. This process is inefficient and slow. Cllr Tony Rex said that the Planning section of the NCC website shows all of the documents related to each application. He asked for approval of a new process where the Planning Sub-committee Chairman highlighted applications to Cllrs by e-mail and Cllrs used the NCC website instead of passing plans around. Approval was proposed by Cllr Roger George, seconded by Cllr Andy Harcombe, and agreed unanimously.

2116 FINANCIAL MATTERS

(i) Payment of Accounts – Payments Due and Payments Received. Cllr Roger George proposed the following items for payment

	£
1. Clerk's salary October 2011	120.24
2. Clerk's salary November 2011	120.24
3. Tax Due October 2011	30.06
4. Tax Due November 2011	20.32
5. NCC Ground maintenance (6 months)	551.40
6. Designer Parks – new bench	198.00
7. Repair work to playing field gate	144.00
8. Repair work to aerial runway	260.00
9. Churchyard grant – Tabernacle URC	120.00
10. Churchyard grant – St Dubritius Church	120.00
11. Clerk's expenses – ink cartridges	27.98
TOTAL	<u>£1,712.24</u>

Cllr Andy Harcombe seconded the proposal which was agreed unanimously

(ii) Performance to Date v Budget 2011-12. Cllr Roger George presented the Management Accounts and reported that Council is well within budget. The accounts show a significant underspend on Playground Equipment, Training, Insurance and Events suggesting that Council's expenditure in 2011-12 will be about £5,700 under Budget. This will be mainly due to deliberate postponement of the purchase of new equipment.

(iii) Concurrent Grant Request 2012-13 and Request for Precept 2012-13. The relevant data had been circulated to Cllrs by the RFO, Cllr Roger George. If the proposed requests are met, the Precept will remain at £20 per average Band D Household, raising £4,780. But, the Concurrent Grant from NCC is likely to be unchanged at £1,700 although the request is for £5,990. Cllr Sally Thomas asked about the item covering footpath and stile maintenance. Cllr Tony Rex said that it had been a long time since Council had examined formally the footpaths in the area. Cllr Sally Thomas said that it was important that footpaths were maintained and it was suggested that Cllrs might volunteer to walk particular paths. Cllr Rex's view was that a detailed plan should be established in the spring. The motion that the specified requests are made to NCC was proposed by Cllr Roger George and seconded by Cllr Lyndon Jones. It was agreed unanimously.

(iv) First Draft of 2012-13 Budget. Cllrs had received the draft document and the RFO presented the data. Cllr Roger George highlighted the budget for playground equipment and said that in practice the figure of £10,000 included c£5,000 carried over from 2011-12. He drew attention to the forecast opening balance of £14,500, forecast expenditure of £19,000 and forecast income of £7,200 which would give a year end balance of £2,700. He added that this would be the lowest level for many years.

Clerk's Salary - Cllr Tony Rex said the budget for the Clerk's Salary showed an increase of c£400 (22%). He explained that the argument for the increase was based on extra hours and acquired experience. Cllr George has stated that he does not wish to continue as RFO after April 2012. In the majority of Community Councils, the RFO duties are undertaken by the Clerk: Mrs Lynda Johnson has indicated that she would like to take the RFO role when Cllr George retires. The extra time needed for the work is assessed as an average of 3.5 hrs per month; hence the budget is based on an average commitment of 22.0 hrs per month by the Clerk – an increase of 19%. The Clerk's Salary relates to Point 15 on the OVW Scale and she would expect to advance up the scale with greater experience. The budget is based on an increase by a Scale Point and this extra 2.5% would be granted when Mrs Johnson completes the OVW Clerks' Training Course. Council accepted in principle that the Clerk's Salary would increase from £1,804 pa to £2,146 pa when she takes on the RFO duties and when the Training is completed, the salary would increase to £2,200 pa.

Election Costs – City Council and Community Council Elections take place on 3 May 2012 and £800 has been budgeted for our share of the cost. If there are 8 or more candidates for Llanvaches Community Council, an election will take place, an estimate from the Election Office is that the cost to LCC will be £1,250-£1,500. If there are 7 or less candidates, no Community Council Election will be needed but LCC will be charged c£250 for administration costs. In the past, Newport CC has been persuaded to bear LCC's costs but in the current climate it is expected that LCC will have to pay some share, hence the budget of £800.

Church Hall Grant - Cllr Rex stated that many Community Councils make annual grants to the community hall and he felt that Llanvaches CC should follow suit. Cllr Rex said the

Church Hall was a vital facility for the community and suggested a contribution of £100+ pa. He added that the grant should be linked to the Hire Fee rather than as a lump sum that might be seen as going to the Church in Wales. At present we pay £10 per meeting for use of the Church Hall (based on £4 per hour), Cllr Rex proposed that Council should pay £25 per Main Meeting which would be equivalent to a grant of £120 pa with 8 meetings. Cllr George formally proposed the increased rate and Cllrs were unanimous in their acceptance of the motion that was seconded by Cllr Andy Harcombe. The change is to be effective from 1 January 2012 and the Clerk will write to Canon John Heales to arrange for Council to be billed accordingly.

Insurance - Cllr Harcombe enquired if enough was allowed for insurance. Cllr Rex explained a discount had been assumed because no claims had been made for many years, however, a lower level of 'no claims discount' than we obtained in 2011-12 was forecast.

Acceptance of Draft - Cllrs accepted by acclaim Cllr Rex's proposal that the draft be accepted as the basis for Council's Budget for 2012-13.

(v) Review of Banking Arrangements and Bank Mandate. In a formal review, Cllr Roger George outlined the banking arrangements and said no changes were needed. Cllrs noted that the cheque signatories were Cllrs Kay James, Lyndon Jones and Roger George. In reply to a query about statements, Cllr George said they were received quarterly and he noted that Financial Regulations stated that they should be sent from the bank to the Clerk. Cllr Tony Rex asked Cllrs whether they accepted that the frequency of receipt should be altered from monthly to quarterly in the Financial Regulations. All agreed by affirmation.

(vi) Annual Return. After brief discussion, Cllr Andy Harcombe proposed and Cllr Lyndon Jones seconded the motion that the audit form returned by Mazars (already certified by the RFO) should be signed off by the Chairman. Acceptance of the motion was unanimous.

2117 CORRESPONDENCE

(i) Letter from Mr and Mrs Connolley. Cllr Tony Rex referred to a letter received by each Cllr from Mr & Mrs Connolley asking for postponement of any action relating to the Right of Way, until their return from New Zealand. Cllr Rex pointed out that we must now move forward and certainly should not introduce an indefinite delay. He asked for comment. Ward Cllr David Atwell observed that LCC were approaching the RoW matter correctly in trying to ensure that everyone is clear about what is legal and what exactly is proposed. He added that the issue ought, for everyone's sake, to be resolved soon. Cllrs agreed that the Connolleys should be informed that Council could not agree their request.

(ii) Letter from the PCC. Cllr Tony Rex reiterated that the letter written by Mr Paul Cooper had been received too late to consider at this meeting.

2118 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None

2119 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 21 February at 7.00pm

The meeting closed at 9.35pm