

**Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Pontardawe Town Council held on Monday 13th January
2014,
at Trebanos Hall, Swansea Road, Trebanos commencing at 6.45pm**

9386. Present Councillors Ms S Northcott (presiding), Mrs J Bowen, V Hotten, H Pickrell, Mrs L Purcell, D Harris, D B Thomas, M Thomas, Mrs E Puzey, G Davies, B Williams, Ms R Lewis, A Nicholson, H Evans.

Youth Representatives – Dylan Williams and Harri Evans – Mason

Apologies: Councillor M James and P Williams.

9387. Disclosure of Personal and Pecuniary interests:

Councillors Mrs J Bowen, A Nicholson, S Northcott, G Davies and V Hotten declared an interest in the Pontardawe and District Youth Facility. Councillor L Purcell and R Lewis declared an interest in Planning. Councillor H Evans declared an interest in any vote on the Youth Representatives as he is a family member of one of the candidates.

Resolved this be noted.

9388. Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on the 9th December 2013:

Resolved that the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on 9th December 2013, having been read and confirmed as a true record, be accepted by Council.

9389. Karen Jones Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services at Neath Port Talbot Council addressed Council: Ms Jones provided Council with details of the proposed changes to the One Stop Shop and Library at Pontardawe from April 2014. She confirmed that retaining the status quo was not an option due to the budget savings that were required however they had attempted to put together a plan that would improve the service to the public while protecting the authority's staff from redundancies.

The proposals were as follows:

- Customer Services would be provided by the current library staff together with library services. This would increase the service from a three day service to a five day service plus access to services on Saturday mornings.
- The cash centre at the One Stop Shop would be closed with cash payments instead being offered through the Post Office.
- Support would be offered to local people to improve the IT skills in order to encourage online payments/ assistance.
- The current One Stop Shop office would be utilised by third party partners in order to provide members of the public with a single venue to access NPT Homes, the Credit Union, advice on Domestic abuse, the Council for voluntary services, Housing benefit, Citizens advice, Job Centre, NPT College services etc. that would be available five days a week.

- The project also would attempt to remove duplication of service between partner agencies in order to maximize efficiencies.

Karen explained that European funding had been obtained for the pilot project for the period to December 2014 however this would be utilised to set up the infrastructure, as she believed that the project would be supported by current local authority funding.

Council welcomed the changes and was pleased that the changes would lead to an increase and not a decrease to the service. They were also happy that the cost savings would be achieved without staff job losses, as staff were to be reabsorbed in other areas of Neath Port Talbot Council.

Karen confirmed that the project was to be monitored closely with changes being made quickly if needed to ensure the project's success. She also confirmed that feedback would be welcomed from the Members of the Public and the Town Council in order to improve the project.

A number of suggestions were provided such as inviting Age Concern to participate in the project and encouraging payments through the Credit Union, which Karen confirmed will be reviewed. Karen also requested further comments be directed to her via the Clerk to the Council. She would also return to Council in three months to provide an update.

The Town Council's only negative view was on the public consultation which took place over Christmas, and which restricted the amount of time available for feedback. The Town Council was also very concerned that it was not advised of the consultation at all. Karen apologized for the oversight and confirmed that going forward this would be addressed.

Resolved to be noted.

9390. Groundworks: Geoff from Groundworks provided details of the amended plan for the Trebanos Park improvement which now fell within the Core Funding grant budget and also took into account an alternative path suitable for the disabled. He confirmed that phase one was due to commence mid February 2014 with Phases two and three concluding prior to Easter 2014.

Resolved to be noted.

9391. Youth Representatives address: Harri Mason-Evans and Dylan Williams, the two Youth Representative candidates addressed Council. Their application letters had been provided to Council Members prior to the meeting.

Council welcomed the candidates to the meeting and thanked them for their interest in the Council's work. They also reiterated that the Youth representatives were important members of the Council and that even though they were not able to vote at meetings their input into the debates would be very well received.

Resolved to be noted.

9392. Matters raised by members of the public: Council was made aware of the proposal to relocate the Post Office at Trebanos from its current position to within the Trebanos Service Station. Although the residents present had no objection to the move they were concerned with the safety of the pedestrians attending the Post Office due to the risk posed by the cars entering and leaving the petrol station.

Resolved that the Clerk will enquire as to the action to be taken to safeguard pedestrians utilising the facility at the garage.

9393. Police Matters: The Clerk provided the following information:

Trebanos:

Total Crime for November 2013 – 1 instance of violent crime.

The next PACT meeting was to be held on the 6th February 2014 at Trebanos Hall commencing at 6.30pm.

Pontardawe:

Total Crime for November 2013 – 20 (1 Burglary, 5 Anti- social behavior, 2 vehicle crime, 1 violent crime, 2 criminal damage, 8 other theft and 1 drugs)

The next PACT meeting was to be held on the 20th February at the Cross Community Centre commencing at 6.30pm.

Council was also advised that from the 6th January 2014 Chief Superintendent Julian Williams was to take up a temporary post as the Assistant Chief Constable. Superintendent Jon Edwards supported by Superintendent Phil Davies would be responsible for the Western BCU for the period.

Resolved to be noted.

9394. Pontardawe & District Youth Facility: Councillors V Hotten, A Nicholson, G Davies, Ms S Northcott and Mrs J Bowen expressed an interest.

Council was advised that the Pontardawe and District Youth Facility had received financial assistance of £3500 for this fiscal year to date.

Resolved to be noted.

9395. Out of School activities brochure: In the meeting held on the 12th December 2013 Councillor V Hotten provided background information on the 'Out of School Activities' brochure that was produced in conjunction with Cilybebyll Community Council in 2013.

He explained that many parents and children were unaware of the activities currently offered in each area, and that there was a perception that there was little on offer. It was therefore decided to collate details of organisations offering 'Out of School activities' in the area and produce a printed brochure that could be given to each primary and secondary school child detailing the groups and clubs in the area, with information such as contact details, prices and details of venue and times.

It was also suggested that the brochure be placed online with links on each council's web site for ease of updating, and that an activities fair be held at Cwmtawe School where the groups could promote their activities.

A great deal of lessons had been learned by the initial brochure production, and although the fair was poorly attended and the brochure produced later than anticipated had been very well received by the community.

It was therefore suggested that a new brochure be produced for 2014 including details of groups in a wider area and with the input of each of the areas community councils. This led to the creation of the assembled committee from Pontardawe Town Council, Cilybebyll Community Council, GCG Community Council and Ystalyfera Community Council.

The Committee discussed the value of a brochure in detail and concluded that as a form of reference for parents and children the brochure had value however it needed to be both paper based and online in order to ensure that adequate exposure was received to all parents and children. It was also suggested that as well as providing the brochures for the school children, sufficient should be available to place some in doctor's surgeries and with health visitors for parents of pre-school age children.

Going forward it was hoped that if the brochure was a success it should be expanded to groups catering for adults, disabled and activities for older people.

The activities fair was also discussed and believed to be of value with a suggestion that workshops or fairs be organised in each area once the brochures had been distributed.

The Committee was advised that the printing cost for 3000 brochures in 2013 had been £431 with an additional approximately £50 for printed posters. The Clerk confirmed that throughout the areas covered by GCG, Ystalyfera, Cilybebyll Community Council and Pontardawe Town Council there were approximately 4000 school children. Therefore if 5000 copies were ordered there should be sufficient brochures for all the school children and for the health visitors and doctors' surgeries.

It was suggested that each Council pay a proportionate amount towards the costs.

It was therefore proposed that in principle a brochure should be produced with details of the out of school activities in the areas covered by the Town and Community Councils present, with 5000 copies to be printed in August 2014 and distributed to the children in September 2014. The fairs and workshops would be organised following the distribution of the leaflets.

The Town Clerk of Pontardawe Town Council confirmed that she would provide estimated costs for each of the councils with the costs apportioned by Council population so that the larger councils would shoulder the greater cost.

The estimate cost provided to each Council was as follows:

Pontardawe – pop 5274 33% so £176 or £255

GCG – pop 3284 20% so £107 or £154

Ystalyfera – pop 3725 23% so £123 or £177

Cilybebyll – pop 3909 24% so £128 or 185

Each of the Councillors would review the position in their January meeting and would advise the Town Clerk whether they wished to form part of the project.

The Clerk confirmed that Cilybebyll Community Council had already agreed to participate and that responses were awaited from the other councils.

Resolved that Council will be kept up to date with developments.

9396. Community Youth Representatives: Council voted unanimously to appoint Harri Mason-Evans and Dylan Williams as Pontardawe Town Council's Youth Representatives for the period from January 2014 to December 2014.

Resolved that Harri Mason- Evans and Dylan Williams will be appointed as Pontardawe Town Council's Youth Representatives for the period from January 2014 to the 31st December 2014.

9397. Open Meeting 2014: The Clerk confirmed that the Open Meeting was to be held at 7.00pm on the 6th March 2014 at Pontardawe Leisure Centre. She had also confirmed that Peter Hain MP, Gwenda Thomas AM, Peter Black AM, Suzy Davies AM, Councillors Mrs L Purcell, David Lewis and Mike James had confirmed that they would attend as panel members. The Clerk confirmed that the next step was to ensure that posters were printed and that the local media were informed of the event. The Mayor Councillor Sue Northcott was to chair the meeting

Resolved that the Clerk will arrange for posters to be printed and distributed, and that Council will be kept up to date with developments.

9398. The role of Political Parties in Town and Community Councils: The Clerk provided NALC guidance on the role of political parties in Town and Community Councils which stated '...that party politics should have no place in parish councils. Parish Councillors are there to serve their community as members of the community, and should not be sidetracked by party political issues.

The Clerk also confirmed that historically Pontardawe Town Council did not align itself with party politics and that no indication of political parties had been evident on any of the Town Councils literature or web site.

Following a full discussion Council voted on the proposal that party political allegiances be stated on the Town Council's web site.

The vote produced six votes against with four votes for and one abstention.

Resolved that no indication of Councillors Political allegiance be identified on Town Council literature or web site.

9399. Community Growing programmes: The Clerk advised Council that she had experienced technical difficulties with the 'Landshare' web site which was in the process of being resolved. She had received no response from Neath Port Talbot Council with regard to the 'Riverside project' and adjacent land at Pontardawe and was awaiting confirmation that a representative of the Community Farms would attend a meeting to give details of alternative community growing programmes.

Resolved that Council will be kept up to date with developments.

9400. Hanging Basket Scheme: Council was advised that for the Summer of 2013 the hanging baskets were £62.85 inc VAT, and that 77 baskets were ordered. Of the 77 baskets, ten were financed by third parties. For 2014 the hanging baskets were offered at a cost of £66.00 inc VAT but only two of the baskets would be financed by third parties and therefore the approximate cost would be £5000 for the scheme for the Summer of 2014. The Clerk did confirm that the expenditure had been budgeted for.

Resolved that the Town Council will provide Summer Hanging Baskets for Summer 2014, however the Clerk will contact the Chamber of Commerce to advise them that it was likely that the scheme will not operate for the Summer of 2015 if alternative methods of part funding could not be determined.

9401. Planning:

Councillors Purcell and Lewis expressed an interest and took no part in the discussion.

The Clerk advised Council that she had received a letter from a concerned resident at Trebanos, over the unnecessary felling of trees covered by Tree Preservation Orders when remedial maintenance would be more appropriate. With the agreement of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor, the Clerk under standing orders contacted the County Borough to request that they only consider agreeing to the disposal of trees covered by 'TPO'S' if their condition was considered dangerous.

Resolved that Council ratify the decision.

9402. Development Committee to be arranged to discuss Christmas decorations for 2014 - As the County Borough had requested a meeting with Town and Community Councils to discuss budget cuts on the 22nd January 2014 that might affect the Christmas tree provision it was decided to organize the Development committee for a date after the 22nd January 2014 but before the next full Council meeting.

Resolved that the Clerk will forward notices for a Development Committee meeting following the meeting with the County Borough on the 22nd January 2014.

9403. Policy and Resources meeting required to review the new model Standing Orders and Financial Regulations:

Resolved to organise the Policy and Resources meeting for 6.00pm on the 27th January 2014.

9404. Additional information re the £500 grant from the Welsh Assembly Government for Internet provision: The Clerk advised Council that the Grant could be used for Computer equipment and software and therefore it could be used to cover cost incurred in the improvement of the computer system.

Resolved that the Welsh Assembly grant would be claimed from the County Borough and used to cover the cost of the computer equipment already purchased together with additional equipment that the Clerk felt necessary, up to the value of £500.

9405. Accounts Schedule 295:

Resolved to accept the schedule totaling £9196.14.

9406. Email re the changes to the One Stop Shop in Pontardawe: As Karen Jones had provided all the relevant information with regard to the changes no further discussion was required.

Resolved to be noted.

9407. Buckingham Palace Garden Party: Council agreed that the Mayor Councillor S Northcott should be put forward for the invitation

Resolved to be noted.

9408. Council Tax Reduction Scheme Review: Council reviewed the information prior to the meeting but requested that it be discussed in the forthcoming Policy and Resources Committee

Resolved that the review be discussed in the next P&R Committee with plenary powers due to time scales.

9409. Trebanos Post Office – Proposed move to new premises: There was some concern over the proposed move however Council was advised the current post mistress was in favour of the move and that without the move to the new premises, Trebanos would lose its post office facility. It was therefore agreed that although not ideal, the move was accepted as necessary. There was however some concern over the safety of the pedestrians at the new site as its location was in the Petrol Station.

Resolved that the Clerk would give feedback stating the concern over pedestrian safety.

9410. School Crossing Patrols: Council was made aware that the School crossing patrols for the Primary schools was to cease in the area from the 31st March 2014. The patrol on the bypass to Cwmtawe School would however still continue.

Resolved to discuss the loss of School Crossing patrols in the next Policy and Resources committee.

9411. High Sheriffs award: The Clerk requested nominations for the High Sheriff's award. Council requested that members provide the Clerk with nominations by Friday 17th January, and if only one nomination received then this should form the Council's nomination. If however there were more than one nomination then the Clerk will advise Council at the next meeting.

Resolved that the Clerk will forward the nomination or report back to Council.

9412. Consultation on the proposed changes to the services for Older and disabled clients: Council suggested that this be discussed at the next Policy and Resources Committee.

Resolved that the consultation be discussed in the next P&R Committee.

9413. Letter received re the replacement of the seat at the Jubilee bus stop: Council was provided with details of correspondence with the County Borough requesting the replacement of the seat. The County Borough refused to replace the seat as the removal of the seat was a result of vandalism and requested over £600 for the seat to be replaced by a third party.

Resolved that due to the cost associated with replacing the seat the Town Council would not look to contract the County Borough to replace the seat.

9414. Memorandum of Understanding: Council was provided with details of the Memorandum of Understanding prior to the meeting.

Resolved to be noted.

9415. Pontardawe Swimming Pool: An email was received from a concerned resident of Pontardawe after the swimming pool was closed at short notice and following rumours of a permanent closure. It was however stated by the County Borough that the problem was temporary and the pool would be opened shortly.

Resolved to be noted.

9416. Urgent road safety matters: A request was made for a pavement to be placed adjacent to the roundabout at Pontardawe Retail Park.

Resolved that the Clerk will request this of the County Borough.

9417. Date and time of next meeting: The date of the next Ordinary Meeting of Council will be Monday 10th February 2014 at Ynysmeudwy Community Hall commencing at 6.45pm.

Signed **Dated**