

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Pontardawe Town Council held on the 8th February 2016 at ARCH Hall, Cefn Llan Road, Pontardawe, commencing at 6.45pm.

10112. Present: Councillor D B Thomas (presiding), Mrs J Bowen, G Davies, D Harris, Ms S Northcott, A Nicholson, B Williams, Mrs L Purcell, Mrs E Puzey, M James, and P Williams.

Youth Representatives: Harri Evans-Mason, Thomas Hutchins.

Apologies: Councillor Ms C Ford, Mrs R Phillips and V Hotten.

10113. Disclosure of Personal and Pecuniary interests: Councillors Mrs J Bowen, A Nicholson, Ms S Northcott and G Davies expressed an interest in the Pontardawe and District Youth Facility as they are Trustees. Councillors A Nicholson and Ms S Northcott expressed an interest in P2015/1133 as they are residents of Ynysderw Road.

10114. Minutes of the Ordinary meeting held on the 11th January 2016:

Resolved that the minutes of the Ordinary meeting held on the 11th January 2016, having been read and confirmed as a true record, be accepted by Council.

10115. Matters raised by Members of the Public: The following matters were raised by members of the public with regard to Cwmdu Glen:

- Unauthorised tree lopping
- Tipping adjacent to a property at Rhyd y Fro at the edge of Cwmdu Glen.
- The possibility of Disabled access that was discussed as part of Neath Port Talbot's previous grant funded improvements.
- Trees across the path on the Neath Port Talbot owned footpath from The Cross to the green bridge.
- Fallen trees on the footpath from the Rhyd y fro to the top entrance.

Resolved that the Clerk would provide feedback to the resident on issues that had already been discussed by Council and would look into the other matters and report back to Council.

10116. Police Matters:

The following information was provided:

Trebanos – The PACT meeting due to be held on the 4th February had been rescheduled as the hall was closed for renovations.

The PACT meetings for 2016 were to be held at Trebanos hall at 6.30pm on the following dates:

- 28th April 2016
- 9th June 2016
- 11th August 2016
- 13th October 2016
- 8th December 2016

There were no new Crime Statistics available after November 2015. The PACT priority remained preventing anti social behaviour at the Park.

Pontardawe –

The PACT meetings for 2016 were to be held at Pontardawe Art Centre at 6.30pm on the following dates:

- 14th April 2016
- 23rd June 2016
- 18th August 2016
- 13th October 2016
- 1st December 2016

There were no new Crime Statistics available after November 2015. The PACT priorities remained anti social behaviour and underage drinking in the Town Centre and speeding at Rhyd y fro.

Resolved that the Clerk contact both the Police and the Art Centre to request an alternative room for the PACT meeting as the bar was unsuitable during performances.

10117. Pontardawe and District Youth Facility: Councillors A Nicholson, Ms S Northcott, Mrs J Bowen and G Davies expressed an interest.

Council was advised that no additional funds had been transferred to the Pontardawe and District Youth Facility since the last meeting.

It was also confirmed that all the groups would be in alternative venues by the end of February 2016. Mark Jones and the Youth Club would relocate to Ynysmeudwy small hall on the weekend of the 13th February 2016, where he would run the Youth Club on a Friday evening each week.

The County Borough had also requested some work carried out at the facility to fulfil the obligations under the lease.

Resolved that Council will be advised of developments. And would also offer our ground mans services to the Youth Facility to complete minor maintenance and painting.

10118. Pelican/ Zebra Crossing: The Clerk confirmed that a response had been received from the Chair of Governors at Cwmtawe School which stated that they were unable to provide any financial assistance.

Resolved to be noted.

10119. Cwmddu: The Clerk stated that the Pontardawe Town Council was confirmed as a partner in the 'Working with Nature' project and that additional information would be provided in due course.

The boundaries would also be reviewed by Neath Port Talbot Council's surveyors following the land registration although this would not be carried out for approximately eight weeks. The cost of the survey would be at £33 per hour.

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

10120. Highway seat placement: Council was advised that the seat had been placed.

Resolved to be noted.

10121. Community Halls: Council was advised of a number of actions being taken to improve the Community Halls:

Trebanos Hall – The heating system was in the process of being fitted which required the hall closure for two weeks. It was suggested that the new pipes be boxed in to prevent risk of injury to children. A proportion of the roof slates had been replaced following a leak earlier in the month.

ARCH Hall – The main hall had been painted following a grant by NPT Homes Ltd. The replacement tables had also been purchased. The window locks and misted panes were still to be replaced however quotes had been received.

Ynysmeudwy Hall – The misted windows were to be replaced and quotes were available. The fire risk assessment had also identified the curtains as a risk as there was no indication that the material was fire retardant and that as they were very old it was likely that they were not.

Resolved That MPN Windows be employed to replace the sealed units as both ARCH and Ynysmeudwy hall as they were on the Neath Port Talbot recommended list and had also provide the cheapest quote at £2020 including VAT. It was also agreed that the pipes should be boxed in at Trebanos Hall and that the curtains be replaced at Ynysmeudwy Hall.

10122. Planning:

P2016/0084

Applicants name: Ms Annie Morgan, 63 Gwyrddgoed, Pontardawe, Swansea, DSA8 4NL.

Site Location: 63 Gwyrddgoed, Pontardawe, Swansea, DSA8 4NL.

Proposed Development: Single storey rear extension.

Resolved No objection provided there is neighbourhood notification.

P2016/0012

Applicants name: Shotview Limited, 87 Commercial Road, Rhyd y fro, Pontardawe, Swansea, SA8 4SL.

Site location: 87a Commercial Road, Rhyd y fro, Pontardawe, Swansea, SA8 4SL.

Proposed Development: Demolition of existing fire damaged car repair building and construction of replacement garage building

Resolved No Objection.

P2015/0433

Applicant: Mr David Watts, 37 Swansea Road, Pontardawe, SA8 4AL.

Site location: Plot adjacent to 37 Swansea Road, Pontardawe, SA8 4AL.

Proposed Development: One Dwelling (Amended plans and DAS received 14/1/16)

Resolved No additional comments.

P2015/1069

Applicant: Mr Jenkin O Davies, Hafod Offa, Four Crosses, Llanymynech SY22 6RD.

Site location: Tyn-y-Pant Farm, Tyn y Pant Road, Pontardawe, Swansea, SA8 4RL.

Proposed Development: Conversion of redundant barn and reinstatement of former dwelling to create tourist accommodation plus detached gazebo (Retention and completion of work undertaken contrary to Planning permission P2010/0210)

Resolved No objection provided there is neighbourhood notification.

P2015/0851

Applicant: Mr Lee Davies, 4 High Street, Pontardawe, SA8 4NU.

Site Location: 33 Church Street, Pontardawe, Swansea, SA8 4JB.

Proposed Development: Demolition of club house and construction of 10 terraced dwellings with association engineering works and parking (amended plans)

Resolved No additional comments.

P2015/1133 – Councillors A Nicholson and Ms S Northcott expressed an interest.

Applicant: Mr Nigel Hayton, 11 Ynysderw Road, Pontardawe, Swansea, SA8 4EG.

Site Location: Land to the rear of 11 Ynysderw Road, Pontardawe, Swansea, SA8 4EG.

Proposed Development: Two Storey detached dwelling (Outline with all matters reserved)

Resolved Council has reservations as there are no parking spaces shown on the plans – there should also be Neighbourhood notification.

10123. Policy and Resources Committee held on the 18th January 2016 – Draft Local Government (Wales) Bill:

The Committee discussed the Draft Local Government (Wales) Bill and Explanatory Memorandum and had the following comments: (Plenary Powers awarded due to tight time scales)

Section 3.1 – There was insufficient information on the composition of the area committees, with no information on their structure, size, legal powers, accountability or method of finance.

They added additional bureaucracy which was unnecessary for areas which already had effective Town and Community Councils, working in partnership with the Principal Council, local third sector organisations, local education and health organisations and local businesses.

It was felt that partnership working rather than additional boards was the way forward as the Town and Community Councils were already local constituted bodies who were representative of the local community and who had the structure, legal powers, and finance to move projects forward.

The area committees would undermine the powers of the legitimately elected representatives of Town and Community Councils.

With regards to Youth Representation, some Town and Community Councils had already elected Youth Representatives who took a full part in the local discussions, information gathering and canvassing of ideas from the Youth of the area.

It was however suggested that ‘best practice’ should be identified to facilitate guidance for Town and Community Councils on how to integrate the young views into policy decisions. ‘One Voice Wales’ could work with the ‘Children’s Rights Unit’ to create and distribute this guidance.

Section 4.1 – The Committee felt that there should be no restriction on the ability of County Councillors to become Town and Community Councillors as the inclusion of the local County Borough Member in Town Council meetings would not usually create a conflict of interests but would instead allow the County Borough Member access to a great deal more local feedback.

Any delegation of function should be only with the agreement of all parties.

Section 5.1 – Any additional access to meeting / electronic reporting of meetings should allow exclusion by resolution to protect sensitive material for example Personnel details.

Section 6.1 – Town and Community Councillors are voluntary elected representatives who represent the will of a community of people. There is no requirement for elected representatives to have a minimum prescribed level of education and therefore compulsory training with consequences might prevent an element of the community from involvement in the diplomatic process. Obviously initial induction of candidates to advise them of the diplomatic process is necessary, as is Councillor Induction to advise the role of the Councillor together with actions that can and cannot be taken as a Councillor.

More technical information should be provided by the officer of the Council (The Clerk) however the Clerk would need specific training to ensure that their skills are sufficient to advise Council but also it must be recognised that one person cannot be an expert in all areas and therefore there must be good support from ‘One Voice Wales’ and a compulsory undertaking from the County Borough to provide more technical assistance if required.

It was also suggested that the Welsh Assembly determine the levels of training required by each element and that funding for this training was provided by the Welsh Assembly.

Section 9.1 – The document frequently referred to amendments. It is hoped that any amendments are consulted on in a separate ‘amendment to the bill’ which could be consulted on prior to instigation.

There was also concern that although the bill spoke at length of ‘Community Councils’ there was no indication that these changes also applied to ‘Town Council’s’, and Town Council’s were not mentioned in the document.

Resolved that the Committees recommendations be ratified. Councillor B Williams confirmed that he had attended the committee.

10124. Finance Committee held on the 18th January 2016:

The Committee reviewed the current Financial Regulations – The Clerk confirmed that there had been no recommended changes to the Financial Regulations from ‘One Voice Wales’ since its adoption in 2015.

The Committee recommended that the current Financial Regulations are agreed for 2016.

The Committee also reviewed the current Financial Risk Assessment and requested the following changes:

- Halls Management Committee ‘Legal Challenge to Management Committee decisions’ Severity score to remain the same however Additional Insurance Cover had been put in place to mitigate effects.
- Freedom of Information Act ‘Members unaware of Risks’. The Potential consequence was to remain at ‘5’ but the Likelihood was to be reduced to 3 which gave a Severity Score of 15 (High) as Council Members were now provided with training annually on ‘Freedom of Information’ and ‘Data Protection’
- The Committee requested one action point for 2016. They requested the Clerk’s Office reorganised so that the desk would not impede means of escape if necessary.

This Committee recommended that the Council agreed the above points and that the Financial Risk Assessment was updated accordingly, with all actions carried out.

The Committee to review the current banking arrangements following the alteration of the rules for the ‘Financial Compensation Scheme’

The Clerk advised the Committee that originally Town and Community Councils were not eligible for cover under the Financial Compensation scheme. They were however now able to claim up to £75000 of funds held in each Financial Institution.

It was therefore prudent to deposit up to £75000 in one Financial Institution with the balance on any funds to be held in a separate institution to ensure there would be full cover in the event of one financial institution be declared insolvent.

Currently all funds were held at Unity Bank, which created a risk to deposits over £75000.

The Clerk confirmed that the Audit Office rules covering banking deposits required that the institution be covered by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme and also that there was sufficient liquidity to allow access to funds. Once these principles had been confirmed the Council should consider a favourable yield.

The Committee decided that any balance over £75000 should be transferred to a new Lloyds Bank Deposit account in the short term to mitigate the risk, however it was the Committees wish that the 'Annual Investment Strategy' look at the possibility of transferring the funds held in the Lloyds Bank account to the Neath Port Talbot Credit Union at a later date if this was possible within the Welsh Audit Guidelines.

Resolved that the committee's recommendations be ratified.

10125. Clerks Report on the 'Out of School Activities' brochure: The Clerk confirmed that the OOSA web site had been rebranded as 'Go Valley' and that the web site was to be available shortly. Harri Evans Mason gave an update on the methods of advertising the web site and confirmed that the likely switch on date would be the 1st July 2016.

The Clerk thanked Harri for his work on the project and his continuing enthusiasm.

Resolved to be noted.

10126. Fire Risk Assessments: The Clerk confirmed that Fire Risk Assessments had been carried out on all three community halls and the Town Council Office. Council would be advised of actions to be taken in due course.

Resolved to be noted.

10127. Account Schedule 319:

Resolve that Account Schedule 319 totalling £8647.84 be accepted in accordance with Standing Orders.

10128. Email received re Trebanos Post Office Forecourt: The Clerk confirmed that a reply had been received from the Post Office apologising for the lack of a painted pedestrian walkway and confirming that the position would be looked into.

Resolved to be noted.

10129. Letter received from Pontardawe Chamber of Trade: Council was advised that the Pontardawe Chamber of Trade in partnership with the Historical Society and Canal Society were looking to take over the lease of 'The Stables' in Pontardawe to create a heritage centre. They were also looking to provide space for the Youth Club to return to the Stables should their application to Neath Port Talbot Council be agreed.

Resolved that the Town Council will contact the Chamber of Commerce with a 'Letter of Support' for their proposed project.

10130. Letter from Clive Reed re Canal Society artefacts: A letter was received from the Canal Society thanking the Town Council for its assistance in storing important historical artefacts for a number of years.

Council was pleased to offer the support and also pleased that alternative storage had been found to protect the artefacts in the longer term.

Resolved to be noted.

10131. Letter received re the Neath Port Talbot LDP: The Clerk confirmed that the Neath Port Talbot Local Development Plan (2011 – 2026) was adopted on the 27th January 2016.

Resolved to be noted.

10132. Email received re Pwllfawtkin meeting held on the 27th January 2016:

Council was advised that there was some confusion over the impact on the roads and traffic adjacent to the amenities site following the proposed agreement to place wind turbines on the mountain opposite.

Resolved that the Clerk will make enquiries.

10133. Email received re supported bus routes: Council was advised that the following bus routes would continue to be supported for 2016:

- Route 122 Pontardawe to Bryncoch - Daytimes – South Wales Transport
- Route x50/51 Alltycham Estate, Mon – Sat – First Group.

Resolved to be noted.

10134. Membership of One Voice Wales 2016/17: Council was advised that the Membership was £908 for the year.

Resolved that the Council will continue with membership for 2016/17.

10135. Urgent Road Safety Matters:

- Council was advised that there had been another instance of a Farm Foods lorry attempting to access the Retail Park via Ynysderw Road however Farm Foods had been advised and they had confirmed that the issue was with agency drivers and was being addressed.
- Lack of Disabled Parking spaces outside the Post Office at Pontardawe.
- Danger to pedestrians when attempting to cross the road from Ynysderw Road to The Pontardawe Inn due to the speed of the traffic around the roundabout.

Resolved that the Clerk will continue to monitor the position with regard to Farm Food Lorries at Ynysderw Road. The County Borough Members Councillor Mike James and Linet Purcell will address the lack of disabled parking at Pontardawe Post Office, and the Clerk will advise the County Borough for the issues with pedestrians crossing the road at Ynysderw.

10136. Time and Date of Next Meeting: The next Ordinary meeting is due to be held at Trebanos Hall on the 14th March 2016.

Signed Dated