

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Pontardawe Town Council held on Monday 9th March 2015, at Ynysmeudwy Hall, Old Road, Ynysmeudwy, Pontardawe commencing at 6.45pm

9830. Present Councillors P Williams (presiding), Mrs J Bowen, G Davies, Mrs E Puzey, V Hotten, B Williams, H Evans, Ms S Northcott, A Nicholson, D B Thomas, D Harris, H Pickrell, Mrs L Purcell.

Youth Representatives – Harri Evans – Mason & Thomas Hutchins

Apologies: Councillor Ms C Ford and Mrs R Phillips.

9831. Disclosure of Personal and Pecuniary interests: Councillors Mrs J Bowen, A Nicholson, Ms S Northcott, G Davies and V Hotten declared an interest in the Pontardawe and District Youth Facility.

Resolved this be noted.

9832. Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on the 9th February 2015:

Resolved that the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on 9th February 2015, having been read and confirmed as a true record, be accepted by Council.

9833. Matters raised by members of the public: None.

Resolved to be noted.

9834. Sergeant J James addressed Council: Sergeant James advised Council that there had been some staffing changes which had increased the number of officers in the area. This would lead to an increased ability to set up operations to tackle specific issues.

She confirmed that for non violent crime the 101 number should be used however she did acknowledge that there were still problems with the call centre and was aware of the issue of a crime in Trebanos being reported but not appearing on the statistics.

A new initiative had been set up known as 'Keepsake Cymru' to assist members of the public who found communication with call centers difficult.

There had also been a number of PCSO led investigations over the Christmas period, which would continue.

With regard to the statistics it was stated that these may seem high as the method of capture had been altered recently which although more thorough would produce higher crime statistics.

Council were pleased with the initiatives but were still concerned that information was not being logged correctly with the 101 call centre.

Council was also keen for the police to attend community events in addition to PACT meetings.

With regard to current issues in the area, Sergeant James was advised that there was still a significant problem with parking and speeding at Llangiwg School. Sergeant James confirmed that the PCSOs were attending the school but were unable to issue parking tickets unless there was an obstruction as the responsibility for parking fines were now with Neath Port Talbot Council.

She did however state that the police would review the issue of speeding outside the school.

Council thanked Sergeant James for attending the meeting.

Resolved to be noted.

9835. Police Matters: The Clerk provided the following information:

Pontardawe:

The next PACT meeting was to held on the 16/4/15 at The Art Centre, Pontardawe at 6.30pm.

Crimes for January 2015 for Pontardawe were – Burglary 5, Anti Social Behaviour 4, Robbery – 1, Vehicle crime 3, violent crime 20, Public Disorder – 1, Other Theft 6, Drugs – 1, Other crime - 1 – Total 42.

Trebanos:

The next PACT meeting was to be held on the 30/4/15 at Trebanos Hall commencing at 6.30pm.

Crimes for December 2014 for Trebanos were – 0.

Council was advised that the transformer had once again been broken into in February 2015 and this had been reported to the Police and Western Power.

Resolved to be noted.

9836. Pontardawe & District Youth Facility: Councillors V Hotten, A Nicholson, Ms S Northcott, G Davies and Mrs J Bowen expressed an interest.

Council was advised that the Pontardawe and District Youth Facility had received £1000 in financial assistance for the 2014/15 fiscal year to date from Pontardawe Town Council and therefore there was still £9,000 from the budget available.

Resolved to be noted.

9837. Trebanos Park: The Clerk confirmed that despite significant negotiations by Neath Port Talbot Council, the Welsh Assembly Government were not able to bypass 'Groundworks' and draw down the grants directly to the Town Council.

Council was advised that there were two invoices currently unpaid for the project totaling £8000. As the suppliers were contracted to 'Groundworks' there was no liability to the Town Council as the contractors were now unsecured creditors of 'Groundworks'. As there were a small amount of funds still available from the Grant, Council requested that the Clerk look into some form of ex gratia payment provided that did not lead to any liability for Council.

With regard to the current WREN grant for the Park, Council was advised that a proposed start date was April 2015 however this was dependant on the weather. The trees from the 'Woodland Trust' grant had been planted at the park however the crab apple trees had been donated to local schools following agreement by the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Clerk.

Resolved that the Clerk will obtain legal advice to determine if any ex gratia payment to the suppliers could be made, without the Council becoming liable for the whole amount. Council also ratified the decision to donate the crab apple trees to local schools.

9838. Footpath Grant and Cwmdu Management: The Clerk confirmed Neath Port Talbot Council had agreed the initial 'Joint Management Plan' and that additional information on actions to be taken would be provided in due course.

The Clerk also confirmed that Neath Port Talbot Council Countryside Department were in the process of reviewing the proposed footpath maintenance plan, however additional information was not currently available

Resolved that the Clerk will keep Council informed of developments.

9839. Open Meeting: Council was advised that the Open Meeting was to be held on the 26th March 2015 at 7.00pm at Pontardawe Leisure Centre.

The Panel consisted of Peter Black AM, Suzy Davies AM, Bethan Jenkins AM, Gwenda Thomas AM together with Councillors Mike James, Linet Purcell, David Lewis, Alex Thomas and Rebeca Phillips.

The Policy and Resources Committee to discuss the proposed questions was to be held shortly with the questions being forwarded to the panel prior to the meeting. The panel members would then be asked to confirm that they were not standing at the next General Election as Members of Parliament.

Resolved to be noted.

9840. Pelican/Zebra crossing requests: Council was advised that County Councillors Rebeca Phillips and Mike James were looking into matters however there was not information available at present.

Resolved that the County Borough Members will provide feedback when available.

9841. Consultation on the draft National Transport Plan: Councillor Nicholson confirmed that he had reviewed the consultation document in full. His observations were as follows:

- The proposed Integrated ticket system was a positive step.
- There was a great deal of emphasis on Cardiff and Newport together with their surrounding districts.
- There was little emphasis on Swansea or their surrounding districts.
- There was no mention of lower speeds for areas around schools except in specific circumstances which were not present in the Swansea area.
- There was statistics providing confirmation that Motorcyclists and young drivers were the groups most likely to be injured or killed in motor vehicle collisions, but no suggestions on how this would be addressed.
- Neath Port Talbot was highlighted as one of the area's most reliant on Bus services for employment and for access to services but no suggestions on how to service the areas needs in the current economic environment.

Overall Councillor Nicholson stated that the document gave a great deal of detail and statistics on the issues with the current transport systems but with few suggestions on how to address them.

Council thanked Councillor Nicholson for his work in summarizing the document which was over 200 pages.

Resolved to be noted.

9842. Planning (Meeting dated 23rd February 2015):

P2015/0103 Mr Geoff Whittington, NPTCBC, Civic Centre, Port Talbot SA13 1PJ.

Site Location: Cwm du Glen entrance, Pontardawe.

Proposed Development: Cwm du Glen Gateway feature incorporating interpretation panels.

Resolved: No Objection.

P2015/0111 Sarah Hitchcox, Anesco, The Green, Easter Park, Benyon Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG7 2PQ.

Site Location: Land at Abernant Farm, Pontardawe.

Proposed Development: Request for screening option under the EIA Regulations for 5MW Solar PV array.

Resolved No Objection.

P2014/0772 Mr Elvis Dimevski, 243 Swansea Road, Trebanos, Pontardawe, Swansea SA8 4BT.

Site Location: 243 Swansea Road, Trebanos, Pontardawe, SA8 4BT.

Proposed Development: First floor rear extension.

Resolved No Objection provided there is neighbourhood notification.

Planning discussed in current meeting:

P2015/0112 Mr & Mrs Rhysian and Owain Roderick, 184 Swansea Road, Trebanos, Swansea, SA8 4BU.

Site location: 184 Swansea Road, Trebanos, Pontardawe, Swansea SA8 4BU.

Proposed Development: Single Storey rear extension, plus rear raised terrace.

Resolved No Objection provided there is neighbourhood notification.

Council was also advised of the following complaint which was in the process of being investigated:

E2015/0054 Unauthorised Development (triple garage) at the former gas works site rear of 12 Holly Street, Pontardawe, Swansea, SA8 4ET.

9843. Policy and Resources Committee held on the 16th February 2015 - This meeting to discuss the consultation on the powers of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales:

The consultation Questions were discussed in full and the following points were made:

The Committee had no issue with the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2005, but instead felt that the changes would add to its effectiveness.

The Committee was in favour of 'Own Initiative investigations' by the Ombudsman to allow the Ombudsman to be proactive in investigating patterns and common themes. It would also be in a position to investigate themes that other organisations may find it difficult to initiate.

Own Initiative investigations may overlap with other organisations however it would need to work within legal constraints. The organisation with the legal power to take action should take precedence, with the Ombudsman deferring to the higher power if necessary. I.e. the courts.

It was agreed that effective investigations of issues should cover its costs by reducing litigation and insurance costs in other areas.

The Committee felt that both oral and electronic means of complaint should be accepted in order to comply with the Equality Act, and to encourage ease of communication.

As electronic communication is very cost effective this should reduce both the financial and time costs.

The Committee was uncomfortable with a model complaints policy which public bodies would be compelled to adopt as the authorities varied in size and complexity. A comprehensive policy that was suitable for a large local authority or Health Authority may not be suitable for small Community Councils. The committee instead felt that an adaptable policy would be more effective that could be tailored to the size and complexity of the organisation.

As standardisation is usually cost effective this should have cost savings however the savings could be lost if the policy is too complex and rigid.

The Committee felt that the jurisdiction of the Ombudsman was effective but that it should include Private healthcare. The funding should be by levy on the private health care companies but should not create costs for the complainant.

It was felt that the statutory bar currently in place should be removed as this would provide a cost effective method of recourse in the first instance through the Ombudsman which may reduce the level of litigation currently undertaken.

The Ombudsman should be given the authority to refer to the Courts on a point of law.

The Committee felt that if additional powers were awarded it was vital that a review be undertaken before/ during and after instigation with regular reviews thereafter to identify issues. There should be a method of addressing issues quickly throughout the process.

Further reviews should be diarised to identify issues in jurisdiction.

The Ombudsman's recommendations should be binding but with a right of appeal written into the procedure.

There was no necessity for other 'Ombudsman' to first obtain approval from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

The Committee was however keen that the Ombudsman continue to focus on local Town and Community Council resolutions.

Overall the Committee felt that any changes needed to be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that issues were identified and corrected early in the process.

The Committee recommended that the above information be submitted to the consultation on behalf of Pontardawe Town Council.

Resolved that the Committees recommendations will be ratified.

9844. Clerks Report on 'Letter of Support': The Clerk was approached by the Chamber of Commerce at Pontardawe for a letter of support to accompany their grant application for a trailer and outdoor electrical cable to the 'Mynydd y Betws' Community Benefit Fund. The Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Clerk agreed to the action due to the short time scales and a letter was provided.

Resolved that the actions taken will be ratified.

9845. Grant funding for 2015/16: The Clerk confirmed that a Finance Committee should be arranged to discuss grant funding for 2015/16.

Resolved that a Finance Committee Meeting will be arranged to discuss grant funding.

9846. Accounts Schedule 309:

Resolved to accept the schedule 309 totaling £9694.19 in line with Standing Orders.

9847. Consultation letter re Court Deputy Savings Proposals: It was suggested that this be reviewed in a Policy & Resources Committee. (Plenary Powers awarded due to time scales)

Resolved that a Policy and Resources Committee will be arranged to discuss.

9848. School Travel Safety Plans: Council was advised that a request had been made for each School to initiate in partnership with the local authority, Police and parents a 'School Travel Safety Plan' to protect children during their journey to and from school.

Resolved that a Policy and Resources Committee will be arranged to discuss.

9849. Local Service Revisions: Council was advised of the changes to the bus time tables that would affect Pontardawe and the surrounding districts.

Resolved to be noted.

9850. Draft Revised National Training Strategy 2015-19: Council was advised of the strategy but that the time scales were very tight for a response with the deadline being on the 19th March 2015. It was also noted that only one response for each Council was permitted.

Resolved that the details of the strategy will be forwarded to Councillors for review. All comments would be returned to the Clerk prior to the deadline for an individual submission.

9851. Reforming Local Government – Power to Local People: Council was provided with details of the consultation prior to the meeting.

Resolved that a Policy and Resources Committee will be arranged to discuss.

9852. City and County of Swansea Pension – Member Contributions for 2015/16: The Clerk stated that the figures were as follows:

Actual pensionable pay:

- Up to £13600 – 5.5%
- £13601 - £21200 – 5.8%
- £21201 - £34400 – 6.5%

Resolved to be noted

9853. Membership of One Voice Wales 2015-16: Council was advised that the cost was £876 for the year.

Resolved that the subscription will be paid.

9854. Urgent Road Safety Matters:

- Loose manhole cover at the junction with Western Road, Pontardawe adjacent to the Avenue Roundabout.

Resolved that the Clerk will advise Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council.

9855. Translation services: The Mayor thanked the translator for her services during the bilingual meeting.

Resolved to be noted.

9856. Date and time of next meeting: The date of the next Ordinary Meeting of Council will be Monday 13th April 2015 at ARCH Hall commencing at 6.45pm.

Signed **Dated**