

Minutes of General Meeting held on Thursday 9th July 2020

Present: Cllrs

Allan Morgans – Chair
Jac Armstrong – Vice Chair
John Almond
Michael Cordiner
Bob Barton – part time
Ivy Watts
Isla Watts
Amanda Curtis
Paul Sheldon
Margaret Narburgh – Clerk
Martin Holland – County Cllr

Apologies: Cllr

None

Members of the Public:

Mr Hugo Watts
Mrs Gwyneth Dillon

68. Declarations of Interest

Cllrs Cordiner, Armstrong, Isla Watts and Ivy Watts each declared an interest in item 10 on the Agenda ref grant for St Berres Church.

Cllr Morgans declared interest in item 4 re the letter of complaint and Part II Clerks Contract of Employment.

Action: Clerk to send e-mail with copy of Declaration form to be completed and returned with electronic signature. Clerk to keep on file for signing by hand when Council next meets in person

Cllr Barton was asked if he had returned the Declaration of Interest form outstanding from 7th May. He had not, stating he was still trying to find the electronic copy. There followed an exchange between the Chair and Cllr Barton and the Chair concluded Cllr Barton did not have a valid reason for not signing.

The Chair proposed a motion that Cllr Barton be removed from the meeting, this was seconded by Cllr Almond. Cllrs Armstrong, Sheldon, Curtis, Cordiner, Ivy Watts, Isla Watts, Morgans and Almond voted in favour and Cllr Barton voted against. The motion was carried. No proposal was put forward to amend the original motion.

Action: Clerk to send a letter of complaint to the Monitoring Officer re Cllr Barton's breach of Standing Orders and Code of Conduct

69. Letter of Complaint

Cllr Morgans put forward a motion that Cllr Armstrong as Vice Chair take over his role due to his interest in this item. Seconded by Cllr Cordiner and all Cllrs voted in favour. Motion carried and Cllr Morgans left the meeting.

Cllr Armstrong outlined the content of the letter of complaint received from the Clerk. After due consideration Cllr Armstrong put forward a motion that he draft a letter referring the matter to the Monitoring Officer and Ombudsman which would be circulated to the Councillors present for comment and approval before sending. This was seconded by Cllr Cordiner and all remaining Councillors voted in favour. The motion was carried. The Clerk was asked if she wanted to attend a meeting with Councillors to discuss the contents of her letter and was invited to bring along a representative. The Clerk stated she felt it unnecessary, as the complaint only related to Cllr Barton and the letter covered what she had to say.

Action: Cllr Armstrong to draft a letter and to Councillors for comment, before sending to the Monitoring Officer and Ombudsman The Chair was invited to return to the meeting to resume his role.

70. Meeting open to the Public

Nothing raised

71. Approval of Minutes on 11th June 2020

Cllr Armstrong proposed they be accepted, Cllr Curtis seconded and all Councillors voted to accept them as an accurate record of the meeting, subject to correction of the spelling of Cllr Sheldon's name.

72. Matters Arising Meeting on 11th June ref minute:

- 53a completed 12.6.20
- 53b completed 17.6.20
- 53c completed 15.6.20
- 55 completed 12.6.20
- 56/38 completed 12.6.20
- 56/39.3 registering of defibrillators still outstanding until further information available
- 56/39.9 HSBC have requested confirmation that the Council agrees to having internet banking with the Clerk being the Primary user. Cllr Morgans proposed Councillors agree to having a Business Internet Banking service with the Clerk nominated as the Prime User to provide access to bank accounts on-line and be able to make payments solely and in accordance with Financial Regulations. This was seconded by Cllr Curtis and all other Councillors voted in favour.

Action: Clerk to re-submit application form attaching copy of the additional information requested.

39.14 Risk Assessment undertaken by Cllr Isla Watts.

Action: Cllr Isla Watts to complete paperwork and return to Clerk for filing

- 56/52 completed 29.6.20
- 57 completed 16.6.20
- 58 completed 15.6.20
- 60 completed 16.6.20
- 61 County Cllr Holland reported that it was not possible to extend the route of the mobile library due to the tight schedule. In order to provide additional services, the Post Office requires proof there is a demand. Cllr Holland will canvas local residents and action as appropriate.
- 62 completed during June/July
- 63a completed 12.6.20
- 63b completed and circulated before meeting on 11.7.20
- 64 both actions completed
- 65 outstanding until Laptop repair shop opens in July
- 66 completed prior to meeting on 11.7.20

73. Internal & External Audit Update

The 4 issues highlighted by Internal Auditor have been addressed, documents required by External Auditor were prepared and sent on 16.6.20. BDH rang the Clerk to say documents had been received but due to Covid-19 restrictions offices were still closed and work would start around September. It could be the end of 2020 before the External Audit is completed.

74. 1st Quarter review of 2020-21 Accounts

Income during the 3 months from April to end of June was £5056.97

Expenditure during the same period was £5514.53

The overspend of £457 was due to timing of precepted income and had been funded out of reserves.

At no point was cash flow in danger. There is an overspend on precepted amount for insurance of £53, and an underspend of a few hundred pounds from the precept allocated for the previous clerk's retirement payment. This underspend had been used to partly fund the deposit for the website which has not been precepted for. The Welsh Government has sent out the Auditors report for the previous year which highlights they consider Councils across Wales are holding too much in reserves. 'Reasonable' reserves are considered to be between 60 and 90% of the year's precept but no more than 100%. They suggest anything above 100% should be taken into consideration when setting 2021-22 precept and the precept application being reduced accordingly. At the moment available reserves are within these guidelines but could go over 100% during 2021-22. Cllr Holland commented he thought the review of reserves was long overdue, Covid-19 has put a lot of pressure on Government finances and given there could now follow widespread job losses, he thought Councils could help by reducing 2021-22 precept applications to a minimum.

Action: Councillors to review reserves during 2nd quarter

75. Correspondence List

Clerk had actioned correspondence as appropriate during the course of the month and notified Councillors. 2 items needed considering. St Berres Church had requested financial assistance for maintaining Church grounds. £400 had been precepted for but given the loss of income due to Covid-19 Cllrs Almond and Morgans proposed increasing this. After discussion, Cllr Morgans proposed giving an additional one-off payment of £100. This was seconded by Cllr Almond and all Councillors who had not declared an interest voted in favour.

Action: Clerk to write to Church offering grant of £500

Mr Reece Davies had responded by e-mail to the Councils letter reply to his previous correspondence. It makes a number of points and observations but does not pose any questions.

Action: Clerk to write to Mr Davies acknowledging receipt and noting his comments

76. County Councillor Martin Hollands Monthly Report

1) As you will remember the Welsh Government via the Trunk Roads Agency agreed to install flashing speed limit signs on the A494 in Loggerheads some eighteen months ago. After a gentle reminder they have said that they will be installing after further speed measurements clearly indicated that they were needed. Hopefully soon.

2) Llanferres village hall roof will be cleaned and a new insulated roof put on top of the existing roof and the large windows will also be replaced. This is excellent news for both the village and the school.

3) I have chased the County re the Community Councils offer to take over the maintenance of the verge around the War Memorial. Have they been in touch?

4) The schools in Wales have reopened all be it on a phased/scheduled basis. Ysgol Bro Famau will be using the Llanferres site because there is more room and the corridors are wider than Llanarmon. The school term will end on the 17th July for the summer holidays.

5) The B5430 will be resurfaced from Ruthin junction with the A494 through the Valley Lodge junction and up to the section of the B5430 completed last year. Once again this is great news for the ward with similar work being completed on the A542 near Llandegla.

6) Moel Famau and Loggerheads Country Parks reopened last Monday and with travel restrictions now lifted in Wales and England we may see a return to large visitor numbers when the weather is better. The Police and the Rangers will monitor visitor numbers and any congestion problems and the police have powers to close Forestry road again if required.

7) I received a report of Youths camping in the Big Covert and a large amount of rubbish left after the event. The rubbish was cleared away by a local resident who walks through the woods on a regular basis. I reported this incident to the owners committee.

8) The Welsh Government have increased the value of Broadband vouchers for Community Broadband schemes. This is excellent news for communities who can come together and apply for such a scheme. Graianrhyd have already done so.

77. Website Update

Aubergine have now created the skeleton of the website which features all the elements asked for but does not look very pretty at the moment. The Clerk and Cllr Curtis will be trained to load documents onto the website within the next week. The design of the home page will also be addressed at this time. Accessibility statements for the Website itself and the documents loaded onto it have been adapted and are now with Aubergine to clarify a couple of technical queries. The site will probably be ready for reviewing by Councillors in August. The Clerk suggested that due to there being no meeting in August she could forward the link to Councillors to look at the site and set up a short extraordinary meeting to highlight changes needed before going live. Changes before going live are included in the cost but would be extra after launch. The Clerk though leaving it until the September meeting would create time pressures if there were changes to be made as it needs to be up and running before 23rd September.

5 competition entries had been received and after due consideration Councillors chose the winners.

The winners of the individual age categories are:

Age 0 to 7 Daisy May Longworth

Age 8 to 11 Gracie Games-Lewsey

Age 12 to 16 Lucy McKeown

Councillors voted Lucy McKeown to be the overall winner

It was agreed all 5 entries should be featured on the home page of the website.

Action: Clerk to arrange for prizes to be given out and a feature in News & Views

78. Projects Update

Fencing has been installed in Maeshafn orchard

Action: Clerk to claim grant from Open Space Commuted Sum Scheme

79. Maintenance in the Community

Maeshafn orchard – White Oak Properties have trimmed around the boundary of the orchard and will spray the nettles when there are signs of new growth. Cllr Curtis has not heard from Keep Wales Tidy re the grant to assist in the creation of an area to attract butterflies.

Action: Cllr Curtis to chase Keep Wales Tidy

Maes Ysgawen park - Cllr Isla Watts had circulated her preliminary report for the Biodiversity improvement plan for Maes Ysgawen. After due discussion it was agreed that work should commence as soon as possible on removing some of the dog roses and planting English Bluebells and genuine wild daffodils in the area cleared behind them. Cllr Cordiner offered to supply wild garlic for underplanting and willow wipps for children to build dens. Dr Watts cautioned against wild garlic as it was so invasive, suggesting there were more attractive wildflowers available as an alternative. Cllr Almond stated the willow den in the school playing field looked particularly good, was now over 20 ft tall and needed trimming. The next Council meeting is not until September and in order to progress work within the right season the Chair proposed giving delegated powers to the Clerk, Cllr Isla Watts and the Chair to spend UP TO £800 during the summer to progress Cllr Isla Watts proposals. Cllr Cordiner seconded and all Councillors voted in favour.

Action: Cllrs Isla Watts, Morgans and the Clerk to obtain quotes and progress as appropriate

80. Big Covert

Mr Reece Davies sent an e-mail to the Council dated 30th June 2020 in which he states that *'I reiterate that the land is privately owned. It does not belong to the village of Maeshafn, it is not controlled in any way by the Council other than ensuring public footpaths are kept open'*. Councillors agreed with most of this but disagreed with his statement only insofar as footpaths are the responsibility of Denbighshire County Council not Llanferres Community Council. The Council has been trying to act as intermediary between residents of Maeshafn complaining about owners challenging them when using footpaths and tracks and owners defending their rights as owners. A sub-committee had been formed in May 2020 to try to bring all parties together but so far has failed make any progress. Cllr Armstrong confirmed any sub-committee meetings were by nature formal meetings subject to the usual Council procedures and if residents and owners were co-opted onto it, it was still a formal meeting. A meeting arranged in any other form is considered informal. Cllr Barton had arranged a meeting on 30th June between owners and members of the sub-committee which had not gone well. After due consideration it was agreed future meetings should be between residents and owners with little or no involvement from Council members. Residents bringing matters relating to footpaths and tracks should be referred to County Cllr Holland for him to raise with the appropriate people within Denbighshire County Council.

81. Risk Assessments – Covid-19

The Clerk has received 2 e-mails from BHIB insurance stating that policies may be invalidated if Councils do not undertake risk assessments when re-opening offices and other amenities such as playgrounds. Opening of offices does not affect the Council but playgrounds do. The Clerk had been provided with links to information but could not find a risk assessment template to use for the re-opening Maeshafn playing field. Cllr Holland reported that in anticipation of this he has already asked Denbighshire CC for templates/notices and would circulate them as soon as available to all Councils in his ward.

Action: Cllr Holland to circulate documents to assist the Clerk with risk assessment

82. Employment Policy Documents

These had been circulated to Councillors prior to the meeting for consideration. After due thought Cllr Cordiner proposed adopting them as read for now and reviewing 1 or 2 at a time during forthcoming meetings. This was seconded by Cllr Morgans and all Councillors voted in favour.

Action: Clerk to include as Agenda items until all have been reviewed.

83. Schedule of Bills for Payment

The following bills had been received during the month and presented for authorisation to pay

1. JDH Business Services - internal audit fee	£216.00
2. AVOW - payment of Clerk salary and their admin fee for July & August	£506.00
3. Gwilym Lloyd – Fencing Maeshafn orchard	£1392.00
4. Margaret Narburgh – Clerks expenses mainly security fee for Laptop	£49.68
5. Lawn Order – early summer treatment	£35.00
6. White Oak Properties – Maintenance Maes Ysgawen Park	£527.00
7. St Berres’ Church – grant for maintenance	£500.00
8. Competition winners – 3 x £25 plus 1 x £25	<u>£100.00</u>
Total	£3325.68

A motion was passed that all be paid by the Clerk. All Councillors voted in favour.

84. Financial Regulations

The Clerk and Cllr Morgans had reviewed the new 2019 regulations and highlighted sections that needed considering by the Council before adopting them. Given the length of the document and the time, Cllr Cordiner proposed leaving this item until September. Cllr Morgans agreed and all Councillors voted in favour.

Action: Clerk to include towards top of agenda for next meeting

85. Model Code of Conduct

The Document is out for consultation and Councils and individuals are invited to respond by 17th August. It was agreed a response should be submitted from the Council.

Action: Cllr Morgans to draft and circulate for comment before asking the Clerk to submit.

86. Other Matters Brought to the Councils Attention

1. LPFRA have asked for permission from the Council as the landowner to prune a number of trees, at their expense in Llanferres playing field. It was agreed Cllrs Morgans and Almond would arrange a site visit with LPFRA to consider the proposal.

Action: Cllr Morgans to arrange

2. The Clerk and the Chair are on holiday when the September and October meetings are scheduled. Cllr Armstrong put forward a motion that both be brought forward one week and take place on 3rd September and 1st October, respectively. Cllr Cordiner seconded and all Councillors voted in favour.

Action: Clerk to provisionally book the Village Hall in anticipation of Covid-19 restrictions being lifted.

Cllr Cordiner proposed moving to Part II, seconded by Cllr Almond and all Councillors voted in favour.

87. Part 11

The Chair thanked members of the public for their attendance and asked if they could leave the meeting whilst the Council discussed the Clerks Contract of Employment. Cllr Morgans put forward a motion that Cllr Armstrong as Vice Chair take over his role due to his interest in this item. Seconded by Cllr Cordiner and all Cllrs voted in favour. Motion carried and Cllr Morgans left the meeting.

The Clerk was invited to re-iterate the reasons for this item being on the agenda which she did. She was then asked to leave the meeting which she did.

Alterations to the contract were discussed with each point highlighted in red subject to review.

Cllr Cordiner proposed a motion that the Council adopt the new model contract, the hourly pay rate should reflect current SCP pay scales, the hours should remain the same but be subject to regular review and amendment if needed and that the new contract should be offered to the Clerk to replace that issued on 1st April. This was seconded by Cllr Curtis and unanimously supported.

The next General Meeting of the Council will be held on Thursday 3rd September 2020

starting at 7.00 pm.

If Covid-19 restrictions are lifted it will be in the Village Hall, if not it will be by Video Conference