

Minutes of General Meeting held on 13th July 2023

Present: Cllrs

Allan Morgans – Chair
Amanda Curtis
Simon Grice
Paul Sheldon
Lyn Gibson
Margaret Narburgh – Clerk

Apologies:

Jac Armstrong

Members of the Public:

Paul Dyson
Mathew Davies
Wendi Hodge
John Almond
Gwen Jelley
Paul Jelley
David Clough
Holly McLoughlin
Sandrine Autissier

643. Apologies

Cllr Armstrong sent his apologies due to being delayed at work.

644. Meeting Open to the Public

Mr Clough stated he had attended the meeting organised by Cllr Grice and after listening to the consensus of views, strongly felt the Council should formulate a Community Plan.

Ms McLoughlin agreed with Mr Clough and acknowledged there was a potential conflict of interest given her personal relationship with Cllr Grice.

Ms Hodge stated she hadn't attended the meeting to discuss the Community Plan but felt it was a good idea and that more meetings should be held to report on progress.

Mr Dyson stated that he would be objecting to the latest planning application to extend the operating hours of the donkey trekking business for the same reasons he had opposed the original application i.e. there are already three businesses operating from the site and approving a fourth would increase the volume of traffic and noise, it would be unreasonable to expect neighbours to be subjected to this from 8am to 8pm, the increased health and safety risk with school and college students being the focus of business on weekdays and none compliance with the original condition 5 which states 12 visitors per trek because the new proposal states 15.

Mr Jelley expressed concern regarding the health of the donkeys which had been rehomed from a sanctuary. He felt putting them to work for such long hours contravened the conditions of their rehoming.

Mrs Jelley stated the two entrances to the site increased the danger, especially to children and that the increased opening hours meant more people would be walking at the end of her garden disturbing their privacy.

Mr Davies confirmed there had been a huge interest in from schools wanting to visit but they would be during the day and not evenings. He acknowledged there would be four businesses operating on the site and that safety was paramount. Plans were in place to ensure each business operated within its own boundary. The number of people on each walk would be 15 in total - 12 leading the donkey and 3 supervising and not 15 walking the donkeys. He assured the meeting that donkeys needed stimulation to thrive and were at their happiest when walking and that they would not be working 12 hours a day as implied. A risk assessment had been done covering the two entrances and incoming vehicles would be stopped if the donkeys were in the area at the same time.

645. Declarations of Interest

None were declared.

646. Planning Notices

1. 21/2023/0391 application for variation of condition 4 on planning application 21/2022/0980 to increase opening times for donkey trekking business at the Paddock, Llanferres.
Cllr Morgans and Sheldon both stated that the documents referred to 15 people walking donkeys and not 12 as Mr Davies had suggested.
Cllr Sheldon felt the effect of longer opening hours on residents had not been given due consideration but that it was not for the Council to debate animal welfare issues. He suggested the opening hours might be reduced to make the operation less anti-social. He did not support the proposed changes.
Cllr Grice questioned operating from April to December and stated it was not clear what walking would take place at what times during the year. He suggested no walking after 5pm from September when it would be dark and clarifying that schools would only be visiting during school opening hours and term times. He would be more inclined to support the application if there was more clarity.
Cllr Gibson agreed and questioned why the business needed to be open so late and how much interest there would be outside normal working hours.
Cllr Curtis favoured normal daytime working hours during the week to reduce disturbance to neighbours in the evenings.
Cllr Morgans is concerned about safety and the associated dangers with children, animals and heavy goods vehicles moving around the same area at the same time.
Cllr Sheldon proposed objecting to the application based on the concerns expressed by Councillors.
Cllr Gibson seconded and Cllrs Grice, Morgans and Curtis voted in favour. There were no votes against or abstentions and the motion was carried. Action: Clerk to notify Planning.
2. 21/2023/0263 manure management plan submitted in accordance with condition 12 of planning permission 21/2022/0980 donkey trekking business at the Paddock, Llanferres.
Cllr Sheldon stated that this had been approved by DCC on 6th June and Mr Davies confirmed this so there was nothing for the Council to discuss.
3. 21/2023/0442 erection of two storey detached garage and workshop, Cwm Bach Llanferres.
Cllr Sheldon had no objections but noted it could be converted into living accommodation later on.
Cllr Morgans questioned why a storeroom needed so many windows.
Cllrs Curtis, Grice and Gibson agreed.
Cllr Morgans proposed supporting the application with a condition that the building should not be allowed to be converted for residential use later. Cllr Grice seconded and Cllrs Sheldon, Gibson and Curtis voted in favour. There were no votes against or abstentions and the motion was carried.
Action: Clerk to notify Planning

647. Approval of Minutes of Meeting on 8th June 2023

Cllr Morgans proposed accepting the minutes as a true and accurate record of the meeting and Cllr Sheldon seconded the motion. Cllrs Curtis, Grice and Gibson voted in favour. There were no abstentions or votes against and the motion was carried.

648. Matters Arising from Meeting on 8th June 2023

- 388/4 Countryside Services have still not responded to Cllr Morgans. Action: Cllr Morgans to chase.
- 533/2 Ongoing, Cllr Grice reported he has submitted a formal application to Denbighshire CC for a new dog foul waste bin and will report back to the Council when he receives a response.
- 622/4 Cllr Morgans has canvassed Maeshafn residents for their views on the installation of CCTV cameras in the village. Of the 12 responses, 8 were in favour and 4 against. Action: Cllr Morgans to progress.

- 636 The Clerk stated reviewing the Financial Regulations was no longer necessary because it was prompted by a reference in the updated Standing Orders issued by One Voice Wales. There was an error in the sequencing of numbers in the SO's and when this was corrected the reference to Financial regulations was removed. Financial Regulation are due to be revised in November 2023 so the Council will need to review this document later in the year.
- 631 The Clerk tried unsuccessfully to contact Mr Sion Evans to ask he was still interested in becoming a councillor. Cllr Grice had agreed to speak to him but he has not been in touch.
- 633 Pruning the trees with branches overhanging Llanferres playing field was completed on 9.6.23
- 640 Completed 9.6.23
- 642/1 Completed 9.3.23
- 642/2 Completed 9.3.23

649. Co-option of Councillors

Cllr Skelhorn resigned unexpectedly from the Council and the Park Sub-committee during the month. No reason was given. Cllr Curtis agreed to take over her role as the Youth Council champion. There are now three vacancies for Councillors. Action: Clerk to continue advertising.

650. External Audits

Still no response from the Welsh Audit office for 2020-21, 2021-22 and 2022-23 audits. Cllr Morgans raised the issue with Rebecca Evans minister for Finance and Local Government during the OVW conference on 5th July and suggested a five-year rolling programme of external audits to ease the burden on the Audit office. She was non-committal stating that new ideas are always being evaluated.

651. Correspondence List

1. Welsh Government's updated privacy policy had been circulated to councillors during the month.
2. LPFRA have asked if the Council can provide a grant towards the cost of their insurance premium. The renewal premium from their old provider went up from £162.78 to over £1000 due to them installing new play equipment. They have now switched to BHIB whose premium is £430.52. After due discussion Cllr Sheldon proposed paying the whole amount, Cllr Curtis seconded and Cllrs Morgans, Grice and Gibson voted in favour. There were no votes against or abstentions and the motion was carried. Action: Clerk to notify LPFRA and make payment.
3. Denbighshire CC have notified the Council that they have purchased two electric vehicles for their maintenance work.
4. The Chair had received a letter from Welsh Government's Equality and Human Rights division regarding the use of prejudicial language in Council correspondence in January 2021. The letter was read out and the Clerk explained the background leading up to it. The Chair and the Clerk had spoken to Kevin Griffiths and Stuart Evans who agreed the matter could be brought to a close if the Council read out a statement during this meeting. Councillors had been sent a draft during the month and after due discussion it was agreed the first line should be amended to reflect that Cllrs Grice and Gibson were not involved because they were not councillors at the time. Cllr Morgans proposed reading out the amended statement, Cllr Curtis seconded and Cllrs Grice, Sheldon and Gibson voted in favour. There were no votes against or abstentions and the motion was carried. Cllr Morgans read out the following statement:

'In January 2021, the then Council at the time, included a short sentence in an email sent to a member of the public which was reported to Welsh Government's Equality and Human Rights Division. Following an investigation, the wording was deemed discriminatory toward the Gypsy Roma Traveller community.

The Council acknowledges that the wording was clumsy and would like to assure the community that the Council takes its responsibilities for equality very seriously. It has learned from this mistake and fully supports Welsh Government's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategy.'

The Chair asked if anyone had any questions but none were asked. Action: Clerk to confirm what action has been taken to Welsh Government.

5. The school caretaker had reported a wasp's nest in the fence bordering the school. Cllr Morgans visited and it was agreed to leave it as it was far enough away from the children not to be a danger.
6. Welsh Government's survey on future health and social care services in Wales was circulated to Councillors.
7. Mr Dyson's email regarding the donkey trekking business had been circulated to Councillors for consideration.
8. The quarterly website accessibility check report had highlighted the same one alert which both the Clerk and Aubergine had tried unsuccessfully to fix on a number of occasions.
9. Keep Wales Tidy have confirmed both Maeshafn and Maes Ysgawen parks have been awarded the Green Flag for 2023.

652. Local Community Plan

The Chair stated that he was disappointed that Cllr Grice had not invited his fellow Councillors to attend the informal meeting he had organised in the Druid Inn on 6th July to talk about a Community Plan. Also, that when he and the Clerk had asked to attend, he had said no and that Cllr Grice had then said in an email to Councillors that it was better that they were not present.

The Chair stated that Community plans had been considered in the past and the general feeling then, was that Llanferres is too small a Council with very little influence on the bigger issues to deliver any major changes. The Council needs to weigh up the benefits against the risks before it can make a decision. At this stage this is not possible due to lack of information. He reminded the meeting that with this being a Council matter, Councillors needed to be involved and everything had to go through the Clerk.

Cllr Grice stated 10 or 12 people had attended the meeting on the 6th July and he had spoken to around 30 others on an ad-hoc basis. He felt a local Community Plan would fit well with the LDP. The overall consensus from those he had spoken to was that the Council should consider a range of activities to include and use the plan to influence Denbighshire CC in their future planning. He suggested looking 3 to 5 years ahead and being more pro-active rather than re-active. Cllr Grice apologised if people felt they had been excluded.

Cllr Sheldon stated that discussions to date should be treated as informal chats and the Council needed to establish if the suggestions put forward were what residents wanted.

Cllr Curtis cautioned against raising expectations that the Council could not fulfil due to lack of powers and/or finances.

Cllr Morgans stated residents have many opportunities to ask the Council to improve the area but rarely do and referred to recent experience with Maes Ysgawen park.

Cllr Gibson stated she was not against the idea in principle but it was very abstract and the Council needed more information before it could make a decision.

After further discussion Cllr Grice proposed the Council engage in a formal consultation process with residents, Cllr Sheldon seconded the motion. Cllr Morgans proposed an amendment stating that the decision should be deferred until the September meeting to give Councillors time to consider what Cllr Grice had been told by residents. Cllr Curtis seconded and Cllrs Sheldon, Grice and Gibson voted in favour. There were no votes against or abstentions and the motion was carried. Action: Cllr Grice to circulate information to Councillors before the next meeting. Clerk to include on agenda.

653. Revised Standing Orders

The amended Standing Orders had been received from One Voice Wales. The error in the sequencing of reference numbers had been corrected and the revised document circulated to councillors during the month. Cllr Morgans proposed accepting the updated Standing Orders, Cllr Curtis seconded and Cllrs Sheldon, Gibson and Grice voted in favour. There were no votes against or abstentions and the motion was carried. Action: Clerk to publish on website and circulated to Councillors for their records.

654. Press and Media Policy

The Clerk had circulated a draft policy for consideration by Councillors. Cllr Morgans proposed adopting the policy, Cllr Curtis seconded and Cllrs Sheldon, Gibson and Grice voted in favour. There were no votes against or abstentions and the motion was carried. Action: Clerk to publish on website and circulated to Councillors for their records.

655. Annual Report

The Clerk had drafted the 2022/23 Annual Report and explained it summarised the minutes of all the meetings that had taken place during the year. Cllr Morgans proposed accepting the report as written, Cllr Curtis seconded and Cllrs Sheldon, Gibson and Grice voted in favour. There were no votes against or abstentions and the motion was carried. Action: Clerk to publish on website and circulated to Councillors for their records.

656. Review of Training Plan

The Clerk had reviewed the training plan and updated the training needs analysis form to include mandatory Code of Conduct training for all new Councillors. Cllr Morgans proposed accepting the updated plan, Cllr Grice seconded and Cllrs Sheldon, Gibson and Curtis voted in favour. There were no votes against or abstentions and the motion was carried. Action: Clerk to publish on website and circulated to Councillors for their records.

657. Assets Risk Assessment

The Chair stated the assets risk assessment needed to be completed and proposed using the Health & Safety Executive template. Cllr Grice seconded and Cllrs Sheldon, Gibson and Curtis voted in favour. There were no votes against or abstentions and the motion was carried. Action: Cllr Morgans to complete before the end of August.

658. Maes Ysgawen Park Improvements

The Clerk reported the committee has established that the Council qualifies for a grant from the National Lottery and that work was continuing to collate the documents needed to complete the application form. 200 survey forms had been circulated to residents asking for their views but as yet only 10 had been returned. Cllrs Curtis and Gibson have invited residents to comment on Maeshafn and Llanferres Facebook pages and Cllr Gibson is monitoring responses. Cllr Sheldon questioned if there was sufficient interest from the community to go ahead. Cllr Grice stated that people he had spoken to were interested in growing food for the community. Cllr Morgans stated the next step was for the sub-committee to report back to the Council with their recommendations in September. The Clerk stated that if a grant application were submitted to the National Lottery, it would take three to four months for them to respond and so waiting until the September meeting would delay progress. The Chair suggested the Council could have an extraordinary meeting before then when the sub-committee is ready to present its recommendations. Action: Clerk to arrange.

659. Banking and Accounts

Cllr Sheldon reported he would check the bank statements against the internet transactions and accounts and report back next week.

660. First Quarter Review of Accounts

April to end of June 2023

Income	£6910.20
Expenditure	£4408.02
Underspend	£2502.18

Forecast to end of March 2021

£19960.71
£19326.00
£634.71 due to VAT refund and interest on savings

Both income and expenditure at year end could be higher if the Council goes ahead with plans to improve Maes Ysgawen park with grant funding. The cost of the tree work in Maes Ysgawen park has not been precepted for and will be funded by delaying work planned in Maeshafn playing field and replacing Tafarn y Gelyn noticeboard.

661. Payment of Bills and Invoices

The following bills were presented for authorisation to pay

1. AVOW – payroll invoice for July 2023	£497.81
2. AVOW – payroll invoice for August 2023	£497.81
3. HSBC – bank charges June 2023	£5.00
4. Hewlett Packard – ink for printer	£45.97
5. Tesco – A4 paper	£9.50
6. Welsh Audit office – postage to send papers	£3.35
7. Grosvenor Garden Centre - bedding plants for village green	£53.33
8. Charlies – bolt and wood filler Tafarn y Gelyn noticeboard	£9.48
9. White Oak Properties – remove dead tree in Maes Ysgawen	£180.00
10. Phil Lloyd & D Pares – prune overhanging trees Maes Ysgawen	1450.00
11. M Narburgh – clerks expenses April to July 2023	£100.80
12. Dawn Skelhorn – councillors allowance pro-rata payment	£34.67
13. Llanellwedd Arms hotel – overnight accom and dinner OVW conference	£167.15
14. Allan Morgans – mileage expenses travel to OVW conference	£95.00
15. White Oak Properties – ground care March to June 2023	£875.00
Total bills for payment	£4024.87

Cllr Curtis proposed all bills be paid, Cllr Grice seconded and Cllrs Gibson, Morgans and Sheldon voted in favour. There were no votes against or abstentions and the motion was carried. Action: Clerk to pay all bills on the schedule.

662. Other Matters brought to the Council's Attention

1. Cllr Morgans had received confirmation from Denbighshire CC that the chevron signs and damaged road around the S bend on Maeshafn road will be repaired soon.

Cllr Morgans proposed closing the meeting to the public and moving to Part II on the agenda, Cllr Curtis seconded, and the public were asked to leave the meeting at 22.10 pm.

663. Part II – Use of Prejudicial Language

This matter had been dealt with under correspondence so no further discussion took place.

Cllr Morgans proposed closing the meeting, Cllr Curtis seconded and Cllrs Sheldon, Gibson and Grice voted in favour. The meeting was closed at 22.15 pm.

The next General Meeting of the Council will be held on Thursday 14th September 2023 at 7.30 pm in Llanferres Village Hall.