

Minutes of General Meeting held on 18th January 2024

Present: Cllrs

Allan Morgans – Chair
Jac Armstrong – Vice Chair
Paul Sheldon
Lyn Gibson
Simon Grice
Margaret Narburgh – Clerk

Apologies:

Amanda Curtis

Not Responded**Members of the Public:**

John Almond
Tony King

This meeting was held by video conference.

728. Apologies

Cllr Curtis sent her apologies due to being out of the country.

729. Meeting Open to the Public

Nothing raised.

729. Declarations of Interest

Cllr Morgans declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Part II's discussion due to his relationship with the Clerk. Action: Cllr Morgans to complete declaration of interest form.

730. Approval of Minutes of Meeting on 9th November 2023

Cllr Sheldon proposed they be accepted as a true record of the meeting, Cllr Gibson seconded and Cllrs Morgans and Grice voted in favour. Cllr Armstrong abstained because he was not at the meeting. There were no votes against.

731. Matters Arising from Meeting on 9th November 2023

- 533/2 Ongoing, Cllr Grice had again spoken to DCC asking for a response to previous correspondence regarding dog fouling bins and received a reply that the matter is being considered. Action: Cllr Grice to continue chasing.
- 679 Councillors agreed it was now the right time of year to sell the ride on lawnmower. Action: Clerk to advertise on noticeboards, community face book pages, News and Views and Facebook Marketplace.
- 681 Ongoing, waiting for response from DCC regarding changing the Maeshafn road name back to Village Road from Pont y Mwynwr.
- 682 On agenda for this meeting.
- 692 Ongoing, clerk is continuing to advertise Councillor vacancies.
- 697 Completed 30/12/2023
- 704.2 Completed 13/11/2023
- 708 Completed 10/11/2023
- 710 Completed 10/11/2023
- 713 Completed 10/11/2023
- 714 Completed 10/11/2023
- 715.3 Completed 10/11/2023
- 718 Completed 10/11/2023
- 721 Completed 10/11/2023
- 701 Completed 10/11/2023

732. Approval of Minutes of Extra Ordinary Meeting on 23rd November 2023

Cllr Morgans proposed they be accepted as a true record of the meeting, Cllr Sheldon seconded and Cllrs Armstrong, Gibson and Grice voted in favour. There were no abstentions or votes against.

733. Matters Arising from Meeting on 23rd November 2023

725 Completed 25/11/2023

726 All 3 actions completed 27/11/2023

734. Correspondence List

1. A residents' 2 emails disputing minutes of meeting held on 12th October were dealt with during the extraordinary meeting on 23/11/2023.
2. Welsh Governments guidance for asbestos in building did not apply to LCC as the Council does not have any buildings.
3. Welsh Governments Section 137 allowances for 2024/25 has increased to £10.81 per elector.
4. Letter from DCC's monitoring officer recommending Community Councils adopt One Voice Wales Model Resolution Protocol is on the agenda for discussion.
5. Llanferres Village halls' treasurer notified the Council that DCC had not yet invoiced them for broadband costs and offered to repay the grant given to them. The Chair advised them to keep hold of it for the time being as the matter would probably be picked up by the auditors in due course.
6. A member of the public had informed the Council that the signage outside the donkey trekking business did not comply with planning requirements.
7. Two decision letters had been received from the Ombudsman notifying the Council that they would not be investigating the complaints from a resident over the minutes of the meeting held on 12th October 2023 and alleged maladministration.
8. The £5000 grant from the Sustainable Development Fund was received in December 2023 to cover the planned tree work in Maes Ysgawen park.
9. Welsh Local Government agency have organised 2 video conference presentations on 30th January re the proposed new National Park. 14 residents have asked to be invited. The Chair will attend the afternoon session and the Clerk the evening one to note residents' views in preparation for the consultation process.
10. The grant offer from the National Lottery had been dealt with during the extraordinary meeting on 23rd November 2023.
11. An invoice for £471.45 had been returned to McAfee by the Clerk because the Council has not placed an order for this service.
12. Denbighshire CC had sent out details of gritting arrangements for roads in the area over winter.
13. 2 emails had been received regarding the new household waste management arrangements. The Chair and the Clerk will be attending the video conference meeting on 14th February 2024 and report back.
14. Audit Wales have completed the audits for 2020-21, 2021-22 and 2022-23. The Clerk has circulated the reports to Councillors and posted them on the website and noticeboards as required. Cllr Morgans proposed accepting the three audit reports, Cllr Sheldon seconded and Cllrs Armstrong, Gibson and Grice voted in favour. There were no abstentions or votes against.
15. Denbighshire CC notified of plans to reduce the library opening hours. The Chair reported that residents have complained.
16. DCC have sent out a consultation document re proposed changes to the council tax banding system. Action: Chair to respond on behalf of the Council. The Chair reported that council tax would be increasing by 9.8% for 2024-25.
17. The editor of News and Views has asked if the Council would contribute to the printing costs of the magazine. The Chair and the Clerk had met with her and obtained assurances that it would continue to be published for the next 12 months due to advertising commitments. The main difficulty they are having is finding suitable articles because residents are no longer sending as many items as they used

to and they are having to spend more time searching for content. After due discussion Cllr Armstrong proposed giving a grant of £500, Cllr Morgans seconded and Cllrs Sheldon, Grice and Gibson voted in favour. There were no abstentions or votes against. Action: Clerk to notify News and Views and pay the grant.

18. Notices had been received outlining planned improvements at Loggerheads Country Park and Moel Famau. Details have been circulated to residents. Action: Clerk to accept DCC's offer to attend Council meeting to outline the plans.
19. Ruthin Archives are looking for volunteers to catalogue old council documents.
20. The current account bank statement at the end of December 2023 showed a balance of £732.84
21. The savings account bank statement at the end of December 2023 showed a balance of £28,751.03. This includes a £5000 grant from the AONB to fund tree work in Maes Ysgawen and the 3rd precept payment of £6417. The Clerk stated that the balance would reduce by £4500 after this month's bills have been paid.

735. Payment of Councillors Allowances

The Chair asked those Councillors who had not already done so to complete the form(s) sent out by the Clerk and return them ASAP.

736. Draft Whistleblowing Policy

The Clerk had adapted a template from One Voice Wales and circulated it to Councillors for consideration. Cllr Sheldon proposed it be adopted, Cllr Armstrong seconded and Cllrs Morgans, Grice and Gibson voted in favour. There were no abstentions or votes against. Action: Clerk to adopt and publish it and send a copy to the National Lottery in accordance with the terms and conditions of the grant for Maes Ysgawen.

737. Model Resolution Protocol

The Clerk had obtained a copy of the One Voice Wales document as suggested by DCC's monitoring officer. Cllr Morgans proposed adopting it as it stands rather than transferring the content onto Council letterhead, Cllr Armstrong seconded and Cllrs Sheldon, Grice and Gibson voted in favour. There were no abstentions or votes against. Action: Clerk to adopt and publish it.

738. Recording of Meetings

Cllr Grice proposed the Council start recording its meetings because it would help ensure minutes are accurately recorded, make it easier to resolve any disputes and provide the ability to automatically transcribe and summarise the minutes using equipment embracing AI technology. He felt the Council would benefit from using new technologies as it would reduce the time needed to prepare minutes.

The Clerk had circulated details of what would be required if Councillors decided to start recording.

Cllr Sheldon stated he did not see the need.

Cllr Gibson felt this was not a priority.

Cllr Armstrong stated he was not convinced it was necessary given the size of the Council. Members of the public attending meeting would need to consent to being recorded and the recording could only be kept for a limited time. When minutes have been disputed in the past the objections have arrived after the recording would have been deleted. In his personal experience, people tended to be more guarded in what they say when being recorded. Larger Principle Councils have a statutory obligation to broadcast meetings but the legislation does not apply to smaller councils.

Cllr Morgans stated that during the past 7 years, there had only been 2 occasions when minutes had been disputed and in both instances the Ombudsman decided there was no case to answer. If the minutes were being disputed on a regular basis, he could see the advantage of recording meetings but as there aren't, he didn't see the need to change a system that works. He stated that as Chair he was not prepared to ask members of the public to leave the meeting if they did not consent to the recording.

The Clerk stated she did not have issues with the recording but felt there was insufficient expertise within the Council to navigate the Data Protection legislation surrounding it.

The Chair asked the two members of the public present what their views were. Neither were themselves bothered if meetings were recorded but felt others would be reluctant to speak. After due discussion Councillors agreed to revisit this matter if something changes.

739. Local Community Plan – Arrangements for Public Meeting

The Clerk read through the proposed agenda prepared by Cllr Grice. She felt that it read as if only residents of Llanferres were being invited and that the agenda needed to include reference to the role of the Council within the community. Cllr Morgans felt some of the language was too flowery and needed simplifying.

Action: Clerk to revise and circulate to Councillors for approval.

It was agreed the meeting would be advertised on the website, in News and Views, on noticeboards, on community Facebook pages and with a door-to-door leaflet drop. Cllr Armstrong offered to print off 230 copies as he had access to commercial equipment which would be quicker. Councillors agreed to deliver the notices in their respective areas.

740. Maes Ysgawen Park Improvements

- i. Four quotations had been received to undertake the tree work in Maes Ysgawen Park at £2850, £3830, £4950 and £5920, respectively. Cllr Morgans proposed appointing the contractor with the lowest price of £2850 to undertake the work, Cllr Sheldon seconded the motion and Cllrs Armstrong, Gibson and Grice voted in favour. There were no abstentions or votes against. Action: Clerk to formally offer the contract to the chosen contractor and notify the others that they have not been successful.
- ii. Denbighshire's tree officers visited site on 17.1.2024 in response to the Council's request for assistance to establish if there are bats roosting in one of the trees. There was no sign of any but it was stated that bats tend to come and go depending on the season. They recommended having a bat expert present when the work was being done so they could advice on how to proceed if some are found on the day. Action: Clerk to obtain a quote for having a bat specialist present.
- iii. The tree officers felt that not all the work detailed on the tree reports from the contractors was necessary and that maybe two of the trees warranted tree preservation orders being put on them. Cllr Morgans explained the work was being done due to health and safety concerns following a tree having come down in high winds in January 2023 and that having now got the tree reports, the Council had a duty to reduce any further risks for insurance purposes. After some discussion, it was agreed the tree officer would speak to the chosen contractor to review if all the suggested works were necessary. Action: Clerk to report back on the outcome of the discussion.
- iv. There had been a site meeting with Harrison's Landscape Architect on 16.1.24. The briefing notes were discussed during a walk around the park and Harrison's agreed to provide a time schedule for preparing the concept drawings and other documentation required.
- v. Cllrs Gibson, Morgans and the Clerk had a video meeting with the National Lottery funding officer on 18.1.24 to go through the administration arrangements for claiming the grant. Grant monies can be claimed upon receipt of invoices from the suppliers in order to pay the bills and therefore the Council only needs to fund the VAT element until it can be reclaimed. Clerk to complete and submit the Grant Start Up form.

741. Dates of Meeting for 2024 to March 2025

The Clerk had circulated the dates of meetings to Councillors and published them on the website and in News and Views.

742. Banking and Accounts

Cllr Sheldon stated that he had checked the bank statements against the internet banking and accounts for November and December 2023 and the transactions were all correct.

743. Payment of Bills and Invoices

The following bills were presented for authorisation to pay

1. AVOW – payroll invoice for January 2024	£497.81
2. HSBC – bank charges November 2023	£5.00
3. HSBC – bank charges fo December 2023	£5.00
4. SLCC – annual membership fee	£112.00
5. Celtic Stone – repair of Maeshafn stone wall	£1350.00
6. Microsoft 365 – annual subscription for software support	£59.99
7. White Oak Properties – ground care from July to November 2023	£1601.00
8. M Narburgh – clerks expenses July to December 2023	£243.97
9. White Oak Properties – routine maintenance of assets	£120.00
Total bills for payment	£3994.77
Plus grant to News and Views minute ref 734/17	£500.00
Total payments for January	£4494.77

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

744. Other Matters brought to the Council’s Attention

1. Cllr Sheldon reported that the since the Maeshafn road had been resurfaced outside Glan y Gors the road is flooding. Cllr Morgans felt this was a result of the ditch having been clean out rather than the resurfacing and would report it to DCC.
2. Cllr Armstrong reported that grit bins in Llanferres were empty. Cllr Morgans stated many others around the area are also empty and would contact DCC to have them refilled.
3. Cllr Morgans had been asked to have a look at the telephone boxes in Maeshafn and Tafarn y Gelyn because the wooden doors are rotting and some of the glass panels were loose. White Oak Properties have been asked to quote to undertake the repair work and repaint both boxes.

Cllr Morgans proposed closing the meeting and moving to Part II, Cllr Gibson seconded and Cllrs Armstrong, Sheldon and Grice voted in favour. Members of the public left and the meeting was closed at 21.12 pm.

Cllr Morgans left the meeting due to his declaration of interest in the Part II discussion and Cllr Armstrong took over the Chair.

745. Part II 2023-24 National Pay Agreement

Councillors reviewed the Clerks pay scale in view of her qualification and NALAC’s 2023-24 pay agreement.

Cllr Sheldon proposed closing the meeting, Cllr Gibson seconded and Cllrs Armstrong and Grice voted in favour. The meeting was closed at 21.30 pm.

The next General Meeting of the Council will be held on Thursday 8th February 2024 at 7.30 pm by TEAMS video conferencing