**LANGSTONE COMMUNITY COUNCIL**

**Chair: Councillor Sharon Davies Acting Clerk: Mrs Jacqueline Ford**

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**MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD AT LLANDEVAUD VILLAGE HALL**

**ON 21 JANUARY 2025 AT 6.30 PM**

**Councillors:** Cllr S Davies (Chair), Cllr R Bevan, Cllr J Bryant, Cllr S George, Cllr J Humphries, Cllr L Humphries, Cllr R Lewis, Cllr I Riley, Cllr B Newport, Cllr B Sheppard, Cllr S Voyle.

**Apologies received:** City Councillor W Routley and R Mogford

**In attendance**: J Ford (Acting Clerk)

**Members of the Public:** 9 members of the public plus 3 on line

Police representative – Inspector Roland Giles

**25/001 Apologies for absence**

Apologies had been received as noted above.

**25/002 Declarations of interest**

Councillor George declared an interest in item 25/014 on the agenda.

**25/003 Election of Chair**

Following the resignation of Cllr C Bryant there was a vote and Cllr Sharon Davies was elected Chair for the remainder of 2024/25.

**25/004 Chair to sign Acceptance of Offer**

No forms for Acceptance of Office were available. When these are found they will be signed.

**25/005 Election of Vice Chair**

Following the resignation of Cllr C Bryant there was a vote and Cllr S George was elected Vice Chair for the remainder of 2024/25.

**The Chair invoked SO.10.a.vi to bring forward Agenda item 10.**

**25/010 Police update**

The report had been received and circulated to all Councillors. The Chair questioned which vehicles were affected by theft, whether concerns for safety affected elderly people and who are reported missing. Abandoned vehicles also a problem.

One Cllr questioned whether it was a problem people flashing lights to warn other driver of speed camaras. It was pointed out that at least people slow down, so still effective.

A member of the public questioned the yellow pole on Chepstow Road which is a new style speed camera which are much more obtrusive. The Police Surgery will be held in February and will be placed on the noticeboards and on the website.

**25/006 Approve the minutes of the 10 December 2024**

The minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on 10 December 2024 were approved.

**25/007 Matters arising from the minutes**

There were no matters arising that were not covered by the agenda items.

**25/008 To consider any verbal or written reports from the Clerk and correspondence received**

The Clerk gave a verbal report on the problems encountered since her appointment in December 2024. Problems mainly centred around:

1. Trying to gain access to emails via Vision ICT (access achieved)
2. Dealing with 3,560 unopened/unread emails from the previous Clerk
3. Lack of information available on PC, laptop etc plus no information relating to 2024 in files
4. Problem of gaining access to Unity Trust Bank (referred to a motion at a previous meeting) with the 2 signatories refusing to sign the mandate (access achieved)

Cllr Sheppard asked whether the previous Chair had been asked for details of HMRC payments and questioned whether payments were paid gross or net of tax. We have no details regarding payroll and nothing has been forthcoming. Cllr Sheppard has requested information from HMRC that will allow a check of salary payments and deductions. HMRC will be informed as well Audit Wales.

Cllr Humphries, referred to a motion by Council, that there would be no signing of cheques until the actual meeting. He stated that he will not be signing anything in the future. It was pointed out that the signatures were required to add 2 new signatories to the Unity Trust Bank.

1. Correspondence received included 2 complaints from the Ombudsman – one of which contained a decision notice which constitutes a formal statement of the reasons not to investigate as the Ombudsman was investigating the matters in another complaint.
2. Applications for grant funding (5)
3. Outstanding invoices
4. Correspondence relating to Training Places, confirmation of update on ICO Data Protection Certificate and correspondence from the Audit Office who are willing to work with us to complete the 2022/23 accounts before commencing on the 2023/2024 accounts.

**25/09 Newport City Councillors Report**

Cllr Davies read out the report from the City Councillors prepared by City Cllr Ray Mogford which included:

1. Details on the meeting between City Cllrs Mogford and Routley with the Leader of NCC to discuss local issues and priorities which included flooding and road safety in general.
2. The budget for road signage has been increased which resulted in the Blossom Close sign being replaced.
3. A ward meeting is being arranged to engage residents on local concerns which will feed into the budget for 2025/26. The next meeting being in Underwood on Wednesday 5 February 2025 at 19.00. Further details will be posted on Facebook shortly.
4. Cllr Mogford gave details of a community event being held on 25 January 2025 in Langstone Village Hall with Robb Dee performing as ‘Tom Jones’. The two charities who will benefit are Sparkle and Sara. He highlighted the event was sold out and wanted to thank the organisers.
5. Cllr Mogford asked whether the Barradell Award could be reinstated to honour local groups and their contributions to the community.
6. He thanked LCC for the improvements made to the website and other positive actions being taken.

**25/011** **Review of 2024 Remembrance Service – compile learning points**

1. Organisation of the wreaths was very last minute. – should be pre-organised.
2. Children did not know how to deal with crosses
3. One resident was unable to contact the Council regarding the laying of a wreath as It does not have a phone number. Advise touse the number on Facebook or Website to contact the Clerk.
4. Proof-read the leaflets.
5. Good numbers but perhaps make seating available
6. Lockup – there are wreaths without names. People could adopt them, perhaps we should advertise the availability.
7. The wreaths are collected and stored.
8. A need for an improved sound/audio system for the service.

**25/012** **Finance Committee update**

1. Various people involved in updates. Computers will be analysed to see if anything can be recovered. The new desk top machine bought in April – has no information stored for 2024. We have 2 laptops from the lockup, one of which is on the asset register. A memory stick was returned with some information available.
2. Cllr Davies, Newport and the Clerk now have limited access to the Unity Trust Bank. Councillor Davies is still trying to ensure that the Clerk can set up payments which will be authorised by both Councillors.
3. Letter required to Cllr C Bryant relating to the 2024/25 remuneration, but also to others that are identified within this time period.
4. Version 5 of the 25/26 Budget has been circulated by Cllr George. Precept will remain the same as it has for the last few years and needs to be part of the precept submission to NCC by mid-February. We need to erode the money we have in our account as we have been working below normal standard for some years. The Fixed Asset Register which will need to be finalised as this has a proportionate effect on the budget.
5. A list was sent to all Councillors listing everything on the asset register. A 1st draft was circulated so we have a list that we can work with and can remove items – some items in Poppy Park may need to be removed. If Centenary Park is not to be included after investigation, this would have an effect on the budget for 25/26 and for future years. It will be necessary to check out some of the items at the lockup and the Asset Register will certainly need to be amended
6. Cllr Newport has numerous cheques which need signature plus several cheques that need amending for Councillor’s remuneration as wrong values entered, plus outstanding invoices. The £150 payment for basic remuneration is not taxed but anything above eg £500 should be liable for tax. Steps should to taken to recover any excess payments where tax has not been paid. The Finance Committee are tasked to look into this whole aspect.

**IT WAS RESOLVED THAT:** In line with the resolution (for recovery) made in the Ordinary Meeting November 2024, the Finance Committee will undertake pro-rata calculations to inform a letter to individuals requesting return of overpayment.

**MOTION:** Proposed and accepted that this Council forward the Precept agreed by Council to NCC.

**RESOLVED: That this Council undertake an investigation into the responsibility of the park.**

1. The Clerk has been in touch with Audit Wales on our required action. We are advised to complete 22/23 and sign it off before we commence on 23/24. The main question to answer is why the variance between 21/22 anything more than 15 % increase – eg staff costs need to be fully explained. Why had the costs increased. There was no significant difference in Income. We haven’t claimed for VAT income or completed a reconciliation for banking. This is difficult to achieve with limited information. With the recent access to Unity Trust Bank, it is hoped that this situation will be resolved in the near future.

(viii) Grant applications have been received and will be placed on the February agenda. The timing was questioned as to when they should be allocated. They were historically given at Christmas. When AE became Clerk he introduced the system where people could apply, when necessary.

1. The Council should look at potential funding opportunities for schemes to improve the area, one suggestion was for sport and well-being. May be look into the future.

**ACTION:** The Finance Committee.

1. LCC Financial Regulations should have been updated last year to be in line with Financial Regulations 2024. Revision of FRs from current to the updated version required by the start of the financial year 2025/26 at the latest.

**ACTION:** The Finance Committee.

1. FoI internal review has been carried out by Cllr Lewis. A draft response has been completed for City Cllr R Mogford and a response almost ready for Jan Collins. We have had a FoI request from Adrian Edwards pertaining to his years as Clerk.

**25/013** **HR Committee Update**

1. HR Working Group have made good progress on drafting a person specification and job description. Further work is ongoing, using tools and guidance from SSLCC/OVW to be in a position to draft Job Advert with hours and paya scales.
2. Once training places are booked, people should send the details through to Cllr George who will update the Training Plan. Cllr Riley has applied for training but Council is reminded that all applications must go through the Chair.

(iii) No further free training places available for 2024/2025 period.

**25/014**  **Planning Committee**

A planning application has been received on the suggested route for the right of way through the Dog Field on Magor Road. Planning was retrospective for this facility. Questions on whether it is properly cordoned off and some concerns over the operational hours of this facility. Only one car at present is allowed to park in the dog field. Should there be scope for changing the right of way? There is an alternative route which makes the path longer or may be suggest they consider other alternative routes.

**ACTION:** Cllr Voyle to inspect the area and put any objections to NCC.

The planning application for Tanglewood – Tregarn Road. Cllr George declared an interest in this planning application.

No objections, it is not out of keeping with the houses around it.

**25/015** **IT COMMITTEE UPDATE**

(i) Cllr Lewis confirmed that the Clerk can access cloud etc. He has updated the webpage and has asked for any ideas to further update or improve it. Most Councillors have photographs on the Website including the Clerk and a request was made for the remaining councillors to provide an image.

(ii) Microshade, we now have access and will look in future whether we should be using Office 365. Microsmith is so busy that we can’t utilise his skills at the moment to investigate the laptops.

**ACTION:** Renew the licence for Rialtas, we can then add another user once we have access.

**25/016** **Parks Committee**

1. Cllr George has received a quotation and has other companies in mind for additional quotes. He has asked if any Cllrs had suggestions on companies that could be asked.

**ACTION:** Cllr George will report to the next meeting.

(ii) **CLLR MOTION:** It was proposed by Cllr Lewis and seconded by Cllr Bevan that Cllr Riley join the Parks Committee.

**RESOLVED:** Cllr Riley to join the Parks Committee.

1. The previous Clerk was looking into using a professional contractor who could give monthly reports and could prove cheaper than NCC. A copy has been found of a Lease running for 25 years that was sealed and signed by NCC representatives but was not signed by LCC representatives. The Council should look into this. Also investigate whether a Service Level Agreement (SLA) covering inspection and maintenance is available, or the availability of a ROSPA report which is clearly separate to the lease stated above.

**ACTION:** Cllr Riley to look into this.

**MOTION:** A resolution was proposed by Cllr Lewis and seconded by Cllr Davies that this matter be put to the next meeting to discuss any progress. If NCC confirm no lease exists it may be required to talk to NCC about a new lease agreement.

**25/017** **Community**

1. **MOTION:** by Cllr George (seconded by Cllr Voyle) that the Place Plan initiative be absorbed into the Council as a formal sub-committee (eg of the Planning Committee) with the existing Place Plan initiative structure and membership retained. All were in agreement.

1. Christmas trees – the way forward. Discussion took place about the time period and whether we should have a small committee to look into this. Cllr Lewis suggested brainstorming ideas and deciding how soon to get quotes after April. The sub-committee could be part of events planning. Put on next agenda.

**25/018** **Policies/procedures/statements**

A draft of Standing Orders has been completed with some moderate changes. The Council will introduce more policies on formation of minutes, timings etc. Necessary to draw up a schedule planning which policies may need amending. The new Financial Regulations are important. All should be updated within the next 10 months.

**ACTION:** Cllr Lewis is undertaking this task.

**25/019** **Public participation**

Aquestion was raised by City Cllr R Mogford on the progress regarding the article in the South Wales Argus regarding Audit. He suggested Council should update the public on what is happening. Audit has been mentioned in agenda item 12.7.

A member of the public thanked the Council for sharing the Chair’s resignation letter. She also questioned whether it is feasible to have a maintenance contract for the park equipment. Children should be actively involved in any plans for Centenary Park and also involved in the community in a meaningful way.

Further question asked what are we doing to involve vulnerable and lonely people. What are we doing with wild flower areas, are we considering bio-diversity and future plans for the planters? Should the Council have signs at the park ‘please keep your dogs on a lead’.

Councillor George requested that we produce a shorter agenda.

**ACTION:** Cllr Lewis

**25/020** The date of the next meeting will be Tuesday 18 February 2025 at 7 pm.

**THE MEETING WAS TERMINATED BY 9.30 PM.**