



**MINUTES OF BRIDGEND TOWN COUNCIL MEETING**  
**Monday 19<sup>th</sup> February 2018 at 7.00pm at Carnegie House Council Chamber**

<b>Present:</b>	Cllr. Stuart Baldwin (Mayor) Cllr. Freya Bletsoe Cllr. Steven Bletsoe Cllr. Kate Boucher Cllr. Nicole Burnett Cllr. Stuart Charles Cllr. Angela Morelli Cllr. Isabel Robson	Cllr. David Unwin Cllr. Matthew Voisey Cllr. Lyn Walters Cllr. Paul Warren Cllr. Alan Wathan Cllr. Tim Wood
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In attendance: Town Clerk, Mrs Leanne Edwards, deputy Town Clerk/RFO, Mrs Debra Jones

Pre-Meeting Business:

- Mayor advised that due to unforeseen circumstances the presentation of the cheque for funds raised at the Remembrance Café event could not go ahead and would need to be rescheduled.
- A minute silence was held as a mark of respect in memory of two past Mayors who had sadly passed away in February 2018: Rosemary Sheridan and Margaret Bertorelli.

**1. To receive apologies for absence:**

Apologies were received from: Cllr. Ceri Evans, Cllr. Eric Hughes, Cllr. Gary Sassoon-Hales, Cllr. Carolyn Webster

Absent: Cllr. Rebecca Porter

**2. To receive Members' Declarations of Interest in respect of the business to be transacted:**

- Declarations of interest were recorded in the Declarations of Interests Register.

**3. To Confirm and Sign Minutes of Town Council Meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2018.**

**Resolved:** To confirm and sign the minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2018 as a true and accurate record.

**4. To Consider Matters Arising from the Town Council Meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2018.**

- There were no matters arising.

## **5. To note for information Mayoral Announcements and Engagements:**

### Mayor's Engagements:

- Thursday 18th January - Opening of Harwood House, Heronsbridge School
- Friday 26th January - Holocaust Memorial Day event held at the Sony Theatre
- Wednesday 7th February – BCBC LGBT History Month event
- Tuesday 13th February – Boots Chemist Hearing Event

### Deputy Mayor's Engagements:

- None

## **6. To Consider Town Clerks Report**

Town Clerk presented a report detailing the projects and services delivered by Bridgend Town Council from 16 January 2017 – 19 February 2018.

- It was noted that revised job descriptions and person specifications for BTC staff roles had been prepared during the month and arrangements were underway for some of the new BTC staff roles to be advertised externally.
- Town Clerk advised that an architect had been selected for the project to move the staff office on the first floor of Carnegie House and that the project will be progressing over the next few weeks.
- Members were advised that a Town Twinning visit from Villenave d'Ornon would be taking place in March 2018 and students from Villenave d'Ornon will be taking part in a school exchange and visiting Bridgend in April 2018.
- Town Clerk noted that further to the Military Advisory Committee meeting on 17th January 2018, there had been a change in the date for the lighting of the beacon on Newcastle Hill. She explained that the proposed launch event for the Heritage Walkway Project on Saturday 14th April could not go ahead, therefore a service to mark the 100th anniversary of the Royal Air Force will take place at the War Memorial in Bridgend town centre between 4.30-5pm on Saturday 7th April and will be followed by the lighting of the beacon on Newcastle Hill after dusk.
- Town Clerk explained that an invitation from BCBC to attend a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 on the morning of the 12th February was emailed to Bridgend Town Council on 31st January, however due to difficulties with the mailbox it did not come to light until after the meeting had taken place. She explained that the meeting was to discuss matters related to Town Centre Regeneration.
- Members reviewed a report of Corporate Director Communities presented to BCBC Overview and Scrutiny Meeting 3 and commented on the projects detailed within the report.
- Members were keen to know when the de-pedestrianisation project is likely to move forward. Town Clerk explained that she and the CF31 Bid Manager had recently attended a meeting at BCBC and had been advised that although BCBC Cabinet support the project, funding for the work still needs to be secured for the project.
- Town Clerk explained that BCBC do not have capital budget for the project therefore funding is being sought via Welsh Government. It was noted that the BCBC report stated that the scheme will form part of BCBC's submission to Welsh Government through the new regeneration framework TRI (Targeted Regeneration Investment) from April 2018. Town Clerk advised that the submission would need to be evaluated against other projects at a regional level and if funding could not be secured, BCBC would need to explore alternative options to fund the project.

- Members discussed proposed parking bays and highlighted that many businesses are awaiting this initiative. Members also discussed issues surrounding pedestrian safety.
- Members expressed frustration that the project was taking too long and questioned the likelihood of BCBC securing funding for this project if the TRI funding is not successful.

**RESOLVED:** Town Clerk to contact BCBC to clarify what funding options are available to progress the De-pedestrianisation project.

- Chair of Finance Committee commented that the report contained information regarding a proposal to replace the Wyndham and Cambrian House buildings and expressed disappointment that the Trustees of the Town Hall Trust had not been consulted on these proposals.
- Members discussed concerns regarding communications between BCBC and BTC and highlighted that the Town Members meeting had been cancelled and that BCBC had not consulted with the Town Council in respect of proposed cuts to bus services within the BTC wards.
- Deputy Mayor advised Members on the date of the next BCBC Scrutiny meeting.
- Town Clerk advised that the latest information from the Society of Local Clerks (SLCC) stated that it is unclear if Clerks can legally be appointed as the Data Protection Officer for a Town and Community Council and that she was awaiting further information to clarify this situation.
- Town Clerk advised that she had recently attended a Health & Safety training course and highlighted that a number of significant Health & Safety matters need to be addressed by the Town Council. It was agreed that a full report will follow as soon as possible.
- Town Clerk explained that The Welsh Language Commissioner had created a new template and guidance to assist Town & Community councils to create or amend their Welsh language scheme. The guidelines specify that Town and Community Councils must adopt a number of measures to translate specific Council documents. Members agreed that further information should be sought on this matter and reported back to Council.

**7. To Consider the draft minutes of the Carnegie House Board meeting of 17<sup>th</sup> January 2018**

- Chair of the Carnegie House Board presented the minutes of the meeting to Council and highlighted significant matters such as the need to re-licence the venue after the end of the Awen Culture Trust contract. It was noted that a launch event for the Spring 2018 programme is planned for 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018.
- Members discussed the name of the Carnegie House Board and the potential to co-opt external expertise with professional arts and culture experience.
- Members discussed the format and distribution of the Spring 2018 Carnegie House brochure.

**RESOLVED:** To accept the Minutes of the Carnegie House Board meeting of 17<sup>th</sup> January 2018

**8. a) To Consider the draft minutes of the Military Advisory Committee Meeting of 17th January 2018**

- The Bridgend Branch of the Royal British Legion was congratulated on the level of funds raised for the 2017 Poppy Appeal.

**RESOLVED:** To accept the Minutes of the Military Advisory Committee Meeting of 17th January 2018

b) To Consider the proposal of a Civic invitation to the Mayors of Villenave d'Ornon, Langaneau and Hechtel Eksel to the annual Remembrance Service taking place in 2018.

**RESOLVED:** To issue civic invitations to the Mayors of Villenave d'Ornon, Langaneau and Hechtel Eksel to the annual Remembrance Service taking place in 2018.

**9. To Consider the draft minutes of the Regeneration Committee Meeting of 24th January 2018**

- Chair of Regeneration Committee stated that he had requested a copy of the BCBC Town Plan. He added that the committee had formulated a plan for use of the red telephone kiosks recently acquired by BTC for use as tourist information points.
- Chair of Regeneration Committee explained that the committee had proposed plans to create a new annual awards scheme to acknowledge positive contributions to community life within BTC wards and sought the support and approval of the proposal from full Council.

**RESOLVED:** To accept the Minutes of the Regeneration Committee Meeting of 24th January 2018

**RESOLVED:** To accept a proposal to use one of the red telephone kiosks as a tourist information point

**RESOLVED:** To accept a proposal to establish a new annual awards scheme to acknowledge positive contributions to community life within BTC wards.

10. a) To Consider Town Clerk's notes from the Allotment Committee Meeting of 29th January 2018

- Vice Chair of the Allotment Committee highlighted that the circumstances regarding no Councillors being present at the Allotment Committee meeting had been a unique situation and questioned whether the Allotment Committee meeting should have been rescheduled.
- Town Clerk conferred with the Mayor; consequently, the Mayor explained to Members that the Clerk was not aware that a quorum would not be achieved until just before the meeting was due to take place, by which time staff, Site Representatives and two members of the public had arrived at the building.
- It was highlighted that an official meeting did not go ahead, however updates regarding each allotment site were relayed to the Clerk and informal notes were taken to provide an update to Council.
- Mayor explained that a new role for a Facilities Manager had been agreed by Council and highlighted that this role will include responsibility for the day-to-day running of the five allotment sites. With this in mind, he questioned whether the Allotment Committee would be required and suggested that an Officer to Site Representative arrangement may be more appropriate.
- Vice Chair of the Allotment Committee suggested that a separate meeting should be arranged for the Councillors appointed to the Allotment Committee to discuss this matter without Site Representatives and make a recommendation to full Council.
- Vice Chair of the Allotments Committee expressed concern that Site Representatives have too much influence.

**RESOLVED:** Town Clerk to arrange a meeting of the full Allotment Committee to discuss the requirement for a BTC Allotment Committee going forward.

b) To discuss a concern raised by a Site Representative regarding a non-cultivated plot at Coychurch allotment site

- Town Clerk explained that plots 8, 9 and 10 on the Coychurch Road Allotment Site were infected with Mare's Tail weed and noted that a previous arrangement for several tenants of the Coychurch Road Allotment site to collectively cultivate plot 9 had been withdrawn by the tenants. Town Clerk stated that plot 9 had recently been offered to the next person on the allotment waiting list and had been accepted.
- Vice Chair of Allotment Committee, Cllr S Bletsoe, requested that this matter be considered following receipt of a letter from him requesting the Town Council undertake remedial action on the plots.
- Town Clerk acknowledged that Mare's Tail is difficult to treat but noted that plot 8 is being successfully cultivated by a tenant.

- Chair of the Allotment Committee, Cllr F Bletsoe, strongly emphasised to Members that she had cleared plot 10 and covered it with tarpaulin last year however the previous tenant of plot 9 had strimmed the plot and spread the Mare's Tail. She referred to previous dealings with the Town Clerk regarding the matter and referred to an Ombudsman complaint between the Town Clerk and herself. Cllr F Bletsoe expressed disappointment that it was being brought up again at a Council meeting and stated that she felt bullied. She claimed that she was adhering to the terms and had received a non-cultivation letter from the Deputy Town Clerk.
- Mayor advised that the Ombudsman complaint was not public knowledge. He explained that the issue had been brought up at the Finance Committee meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> February and during the committee meeting, the Clerk had been requested to include an item on the agenda for the Town Council meeting to address a concern regarding the non-cultivated plot.
- Chair of Finance Committee highlighted that staff should not have to deal with this difficult situation.
- Mayor referred to the standards that Councillors must adhere to and highlighted that as Cllr Freya Bletsoe and Cllr Steven Bletsoe are Chair and Vice Chair of the Allotment Committee, Council must ensure that there is no public perception of preferential treatment for Councillors.
- Town Clerk provided information about non-cultivation and her duty to carry out regular allotment inspections. She added that plot 10 did not meet required standards during the past two site inspections in August and October 2017.
- Cllr S Bletsoe proposed that a meeting should be arranged with the Chair of Personnel, Mayor, Chair of Allotment Committee and Vice Chair of Allotment Committee to discuss this matter.
- Cllr M Voisey commented that although he understood the problems associated with Mare's Tail and the work required to alleviate it, Councillors must be viewed as being above duplicity and stated that the matter should be resolved at full Council.
- Cllr M Voisey highlighted that there is clearly an issue with Mare's Tail and suggested that plot holders on these plots make visible efforts to control the weed and that BTC renew the lease on these plots for a 12-month period. He added that this matter should not be dealt with outside the Council Chamber due to concerns regarding public perception.
- Vice Chair of the Allotment Committee referred to difficult personal circumstances over the past few months and suggested that support should have been offered from Site Representatives and fellow tenants with the plot.
- Chair of the Allotment Committee referred to the length of time she had waited for an allotment plot and claimed that she had been told by the Town Clerk to give up the plot and view alternative plots. She also referred to the way she had been treated by Site Representatives and fellow tenants and stated that she felt bullied out of the allotment plot.
- Mayor acknowledged that it had been a difficult situation and although he appreciated how Cllr Bletsoe felt, he explained that the Town Clerk had a duty to follow procedures and he did not feel that any bullying was taking place at Bridgend Town Council or within the Chamber.
- Cllr F Bletsoe and Cllr S Bletsoe left the meeting. Town Clerk left the Chamber temporarily and returned to the meeting.
- Members expressed concern that Cllr F Bletsoe and Cllr S Bletsoe had attempted to influence discussions on a matter for which they both have a prejudicial interest.
- Members also expressed serious concern regarding Cllr F. Bletsoe's behaviour in Chamber and accusations she had made which were directed towards the Town Clerk.
- Cllr L Walters stated that there had been a clear breach of the Code of Conduct and asked if other Members of the Council agreed. Members agreed with her observation.
- It was noted that Declaration of Interest Forms had been completed by both Cllr F. Bletsoe and Cllr S. Bletsoe stating that the nature of the interest disclosed as 'Previous Allotment Holder'. Member commented that these interests had not be mentioned by either Councillors at the start

of the discussions for this agenda item. The declarations were challenged by Members because the interest had been registered on the basis of being a former rather than a current allotment tenant.

- Members discussed the Code of Conduct and expressed concern about staff welfare and the behaviour of Cllr F. Bletsoe in the Chamber.
- Members questioned whether Cllr F Bletsoe's behaviour was following a particular pattern of behaviour. It was noted that it was not the first time that the Clerk had experienced this behaviour from the Member.
- Members considered options available to the Council to deal with this situation however the Town Clerk reminded Council that the only options available to the Council are to write a letter to a Member, to remove a Member from a Committee or for a Member to refer a Member to the Ombudsman.
- It was proposed that the tenancy agreement for plot 10 should not be renewed when it expires on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018.

**RESOLVED:** Members unanimously agreed that the tenancy of plot 10 be terminated as at the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018.

**RESOLVED:** To seek advice from the Monitoring Officer regarding a potential breach of the Code of Conduct in respect of incorrect declarations of interests and by attempting to influence a discussion on a matter for which an interest has been declared.

- It was suggested that a Councillor had attempted to undermine the position of the Clerk and Members and the Mayor commented that the Clerk is feeling bullied and intimidated within her workplace.
- Members expressed concern regarding staff welfare and noted that staff welfare policies are not in place.
- Members unanimously agreed to seek advice from the Monitoring Officer regarding concerns about Cllr F Bletsoe's behaviour towards the Town Clerk as witnessed by Council.

**RESOLVED:** Mayor to seek advice from the Monitoring Officer regarding concerns about Cllr F Bletsoe's behaviour towards the Town Clerk.

**RESOLVED:** That Cllr F Bletsoe be removed from all committees until further notice, pending advice from the Monitoring Officer.

**RESOLVED:** That Cllr S Bletsoe be removed from the allotment committee, pending advice from the Monitoring Officer.

- Cllr P Warren suggested that Council also have a duty to investigate Cllr F Bletsoe's claim of bullying by a Site Representative.

**RESOLVED:** That further information be sought regarding an allegation of bullying made by Cllr F Bletsoe

- Chair of Finance Committee proposed that the meeting should be suspended and reconvened next week due to concerns about staff welfare. He noted the length of time staff had worked during the day.

**RESOLVED:** To suspend the meeting subject to any urgent business that could not wait until the following week.

- Deputy Mayor explained that he had been appointed to a working group to review the Town and Community Council Charter. He highlighted that a deadline of 15<sup>th</sup> March 2018 had been set for receipt of responses to the review, however an email had been sent to the Town Clerk today to

advise the deadline should have read 15<sup>th</sup> February 2018. Members were asked to send any comments on the proposed charter to him by the end of the week.

- Cllr S Bletsoe returned to the meeting.
- Mayor availed Cllr S Bletsoe of decisions taken under agenda item 10b.
- Cllr S Bletsoe stated that he had assumed that the non-cultivation letter was a termination of the tenancy agreement.
- Cllr S Bletsoe questioned why he had been removed from the Allotment Committee. Mayor advised that Council had taken the decision due to a conflict of interest.
- Cllr S Bletsoe referred to the way procedures had been dealt with by staff.
- Mayor advised that a decision had been taken to suspend the meeting.
- Cllr S Bletsoe stated that he wanted to discuss a matter associated with agenda item 18 to issue a press release.
- The Mayor explained that the meeting would be reconvened at 7pm on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> February and closed the meeting.

**Meeting closed at 9.30pm**

Signed .....

Date .....

Mayor