



MINUTES OF BRIDGEND TOWN COUNCIL EXTRA -ORDINARY TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

Meeting Details:

Date: Tuesday 14th September 2021

Time: 6pm

Location: The meeting will be held remotely via Microsoft Teams for Business under the Local Government and Elections Act (Wales) 2021

Chairperson: The Mayor, Cllr Steven Bletsoe

Staff: Mrs L Edwards (Town Clerk), Miss J Brown (Democratic Services Officer)

In Attendance:

Cllr Alan Wathan – PRESENT

Cllr Chris Woodman - PRESENT

Cllr David Unwin – PRESENT

Cllr Martin Smidman – PRESENT

Cllr Nicole Burnett – PRESENT

Cllr Steven Bletsoe (Mayor) – PRESENT

Cllr Stuart Baldwin – PRESENT

Cllr Ian Williams – PRESENT

Cllr Freya Bletsoe – PRESENT

Cllr Carolyn Webster – PRESENT

Cllr Tim Wood - PRESENT

- The Mayor thanked Councillors for attending the meeting which was called due to an extremely urgent matter. The Mayor explained the terms of the meeting and that it had been possible to arrange it at short notice under powers in *The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021* and upon the advice of One Voice Wales. He explained that the recent Act has approved that emergency meetings can now be called within a 24-hour period and therefore the Town Clerk had requested that a meeting of Full Town Council be convened.
- The Mayor highlighted that information regarding the current insurance issue had been circulated to all Councillor and asked if Councillors had any questions or required more information regarding the terms of the meeting. There were no questions.
- The Mayor announced that the meeting was quorate.

1. To Receive Apologies for Absence

- Cllr Robbie Thomas, Cllr Ceri Evans, Cllr Lyn Walters, Cllr Michelle Blundell-Humphreys
- **Absent:** Cllr Stuart Charles, Cllr Angela Morelli, Cllr M Voisey

2. To Receive Declarations of Interests (if any) of Members in respect of the business to be transacted

- There were no declarations of interest

3. Town Council Insurance

- The Mayor asked Members if they had received, read and understood the previously circulated documents and asked if there were any questions. There were no questions.

a. To receive an update from the Town Clerk regarding the renewal of Bridgend Town Council insurance policies

- The Town Clerk informed Members that during the past month an unexpected and significant situation had arisen with the renewal of the Bridgend Town Council insurance policies and there is a very real risk that Bridgend Town Council could be without any insurance cover at all after midnight on Wednesday 15th September 2021.
- The Town Clerk made clear to Members that this issue is caused by a 3rd party and through no fault of the Council. Insurance cover for Town and Community Councils is complex due to the nature of public assets owned by Councils, the public services they provide, events they arrange and liability cover required. There are only a few brokers that specialise in this sector.
- The Town Clerk advised Councillors that historically Bridgend Town Council insurance cover has been arranged via insurance broker WPS Hallam who specialise in the provision of insurance quotes for larger Town Councils. There is another insurance broker called 'Came and Company' that provide insurance quotes for Town and Community Councils and the two brokers have a gentleman's arrangement not to poach each other's clients and do not provide quotes to Councils who use their competitor. There is a third broker called BHIB who is recommended by the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC).
- The Town Clerk stated that the Town Council's insurance policies (Buildings & Contents, Public Assets, Money Insurance, Business Interruption Insurance, Employer liability, Public liability, Fidelity insurance etc.) are due for renewal on 16th September 2021.
- She explained that the renewal is usually a fairly straightforward process and that work with WPS Hallam begins at least two months in advance of the renewal date to review requirements and provide details of any changes, additions to assets and equipment etc. The process for this year's renewal commenced in July, however last week The Town Clerk explained that she received an unexpected telephone call from WPS Hallam to explain that the company are unable to provide a quote for renewal at this time.
- Members were advised that WPS Hallam go out to tender on behalf of Town & Community Councils to find the best insurance policies, cover and supplier at the best cost. For the past three years, Royal Sun Alliance were successful in the tender process and have provided the insurance cover for Bridgend Town Council. This year, due to the level of claims they have paid out over the past year, Royal Sun Alliance advised the broker that it could not continue to offer competitive cover for the Town and Community Council sector and would not be able to provide quotes for renewals.
- It was noted that WPS Hallam therefore undertook a new tender process to procure an alternative insurance provider for Town and Community Councils with policies due for renewal. The Military Mutual were successful in the tender process and were due to begin providing quotes however unfortunately last week, The Military Mutual advised WPS Hallam that due to an internal audit they have had to seek additional reinsurance and cannot currently process quotes. This put WPS Hallam and the Councils they serve in a very difficult position.
- The Town Clerk advised that she had explored the following options and taken the following action:
 1. Royal Sun Alliance have been asked if they would agree to extend the existing policy for one month.
 2. Specialist brokers 'Came and Co' and BHIB have been asked to seek insurance quotations for Bridgend Town Council.
 3. Zurich insurance who provide insurance cover for local authorities have been asked to provide a quote.

4. One Voice Wales have been advised of the situation and are speaking to brokers on behalf of the Town Council.
5. To date, Royal Sun Alliance are still considering the request and have not been able to respond either way.

- The Town Clerk explained that she had provided all the companies with a range of information such as the BTC Asset register, previous insurance schedule and financial information. They all responded with a range of questions about security, the previous asbestos situation, questions about the Council, number of Councillors, staffing levels, tools used by the Outdoor Team etc. The Town Clerk had been responding to these queries for the past week.
- The Town Clerk explained that Zurich advise that they need a 3 month lead time for the provision of new quotes due to the complexities of the sector. They understand the difficult situation BTC are in and could provide a quote within one month if needed and would require a site visit. She also explained that Came and Company contacted two insurers they usually work with for the Town & Community Council sector, one insurer refused to quote at this time and the other has responded with a conditional quote. Came and Co have now contacted a third company and we are awaiting a response. BHIB are trying to provide a quote but cannot guarantee it at this point.
- The Town Clerk reported that she had been advised that Mutual companies (such as The Military Mutual) initially proposed by WPS Hallam are different to regular insurance companies and can pose more risk to Councils regarding the payment of insurance claims.
- The Town Clerk advised Councillors that Two Extra-ordinary Finance Committee meetings have been held to discuss the situation and referred to the minutes which had been circulated.
- The Town Clerk reported that since the Extra-ordinary meeting of today (Monday 13th September) one quote has now been received from Hiscocks and referred Members to this information which had been circulated.
- The Town Clerk reminded Members that The Bridgend Town Council Financial Regulations specify that all expenditure over £10,000 must be authorised by Full Council. Historically the annual insurance policy has been below this value and could be authorised by Finance Committee however the new quote exceeds £10,000 therefore must be reviewed and agreed by Full Council.
- The Town Clerk expressed her grave concerns at the gravity of the situation, with no insurance cover from the 15th of September. The Town Clerk advised members that she had put into place a plan which would enable Council to function, but this would not include use of any buildings or equipment and the outdoor team would not be able to work until insured.

b. To review insurance quotes and agree an insurance policy for 2021/22

- The Mayor asked if all Councillors were in agreement to proceed to review the insurance quote circulated.
- The Chair of Finance confirmed the minutes of the finance committee meeting which had been circulated to be a statement of fact which would be included on the agenda for the next full Council meeting.
- The Mayor proposed that Council proceed with the one quote which had been received had been circulated.
- Cllr S Baldwin proposed that the motion be accepted forthwith without discussion.
- Councillors debated the options of one year or 3 year cover.
- Cllr D Unwin advised that 3 year cover would be preferable due to the problems within the insurance industry and noted that premiums could rise.
- The Town Clerk highlighted to Members the following caveats:
 1. Both buildings exclude flood cover, and the council will need to decide if flood cover is important. We do have a separate policy that will cover flood and separate quotes would be sought for that which will be sent later today or tomorrow. For example at Ty'r Ardd, if the council wanted £10,000 when water hit 20cm deep, the cost would be £220 but this can be altered to suit whatever you need or want

2. The Ty'r Ardd building will only have cover for fire lightning aircraft and explosion until the works have been completed. Once the works have been completed the building will move back to full cover and because it is occupied there will be a small refund due back. It's important that the council read the endorsements on the quote schedule to ensure that you comply with them. The Town Clerk advised that she was available to talk them through if required.

- Cllr D Unwin proposed that the above caveats be noted and moved that the Insurance quote from Hiscocks be approved with immediate effect.
- There were no objections.

RESOLVED: That Bridgend Town Council accept the insurance schedule and quote from Hiscocks as provided and that The Town Clerk pursue separate quotes for flood cover.

- The Mayor thanked Councillors for their attendance and patience.
- Cllr I Williams thanked the Town Clerk on behalf of all Councillors for her hard work on the matter.
- The Town Clerk advised that the planned extra ordinary Financial Committee meeting was now no longer required and could be cancelled.

Meeting closed: 6.25pm

Signed

Date

Mayor