



## MINUTES OF EXTRA-ORDINARY BRIDGEND TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

### Meeting Details:

Date: Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> August 2023

Time: 10.00am

The meeting was held as a hybrid meeting both at Carnegie House and remotely via Microsoft Teams for Business under the Local Government and Elections Act (Wales) 2021.

Chairperson: The Mayor (Cllr Freya Bletsoe)

Staff: Mrs L Edwards (Town Clerk), Mrs D Jones (Deputy Town Clerk & RFO), Ms R Stone (Facilities Manager) & Mrs K Davies (Facilities & Projects Officer)

Invited Guests: Quantity Surveyor for Town Hall Project, Architect/Project Manager for Town Hall Project & Representative from Hydrock

### In Attendance:

Cllr F Bletsoe (Mayor) – In Person	Cllr Ann Lloyd – In Person
Cllr S Bletsoe – In Person	Cllr I Spiller - Remote
Cllr N Deere – Remote	Cllr David Unwin – In Person
Cllr D Evans – Remote	Cllr A Wathan – In Person
Cllr K Evans – Remote	Cllr C Webster – Remote
Cllr A Felton – Remote	Cllr I Williams – In Person

### 1. To Receive Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr M Blundell-Humphreys, Cllr S Easterbrook, Cllr P Settle and Cllr T Wood

Absent: Cllr D Brown, Cllr F Sullivan

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

- Cllr F Bletsoe made a declaration of personal interest in any discussions relating to BCBC as a BCBC Councillor and in agenda item 4.
- Cllr I Spiller made a declaration of personal interest in any discussions relating to BCBC as a BCBC Councillor, in agenda item 4 as a member of Laleston Community Council.
- Cllr A Wathan made a declaration of personal interest in any discussions relating to BCBC as a BCBC Councillor and as Chair of Coity Higher Community Council.
- Cllr I Williams made a declaration of personal interest in any discussions relating to BCBC as a BCBC Councillor.
- Cllr S Bletsoe made a declaration of personal interest in any discussions relating to BCBC as a BCBC Councillor and in agenda item 4 as a member appointed to the panel for the review

of Town & Community Councils and as a member of Coity Higher Community Council.

**3. To discuss the Town Hall replacement heating system costs with the professionals appointed to prepare the tender specification and agree a way forward.**

- The Town Clerk provided a brief overview of the current situation and explained that three tenders had been received for the replacement boiler project however only one contractor met the required criteria for the tender.
- It was noted that all three quotes significantly exceeded the available budget.
- Members were reminded that at a meeting of Council on 31<sup>st</sup> July, Council had agreed not to pursue a loan to cover the additional cost as it cannot be justified to the residents. It was therefore agreed to call the extra-ordinary meeting for Councillors to meet with the appointed professionals to review and discuss the specification of the boiler and explore more cost-effective options.
- The Town Clerk read out an email from the Architect/Project Manager which suggested two options:

Option 1:

- To provisionally appoint the only compliant tenderer (of the three), which was also the cheapest, subject to a Value Engineering Workshop in Mid-August. This would require the Quantity Surveyor to examine the cost analysis and provide comments and for the successful contractor to propose cheaper alternatives that can still achieve what is required for the building i.e. Boilers, pumps, etc.
- The successful tenderer would then need to provide a revised price for the Council to review.
- If approved, the timescale would be to formally appoint the contractor and start work onsite mid-September at the earliest.
- Assuming a 7-week contract, the work would be complete by the end of October / early November 2023.

Option 2:

- To use the cost analysis from the only compliant and cheapest tender response as a guide and ask Hydrock to re-examine the design to make it cheaper.
  - The tender package will then need to be re-advertised in early September and the Council should allow 4 weeks to give companies more time to tender and obtain the best prices.
  - This will incur additional consultant fees.
  - Tender responses will be received mid-October and the Council could look to appoint as soon as possible after this to allow works to start onsite late October / early November with the aim to complete the contract before Christmas 2023.
- The Town Clerk informed Council that the architect had recommended to progress with Option 1, however, she provided advice that as the Town Council administers public funds, there are strict rules about procurement contained within the Council's Financial Regulations and within The Public Contracts Regulations 2015.
  - She noted that she had liaised with the Deputy Clerk/RFO and checked the regulations and legislation carefully and that the Council should not appoint a contractor or "preferred bidder" under the rules that govern public funds for the following reasons:
    - The Council does not have a budget exceeding £90k to cover the cost and would need to seek a loan, therefore the following regulation applies:

- *BUDGETARY CONTROL AND AUTHORITY TO SPEND*
- *No expenditure shall be authorised in relation to any capital project and no contract entered into or tender accepted involving capital expenditure unless the Council is satisfied that the necessary funds are available and the requisite borrowing approval has been obtained.*
  
- In the Councils Financial Regulations and The Public Contracts Regulations 2015, there are rules regarding equality and transparency, which mean that the Council cannot select a preferred bidder then change the tender requirements to enable one company to submit a revised cost.
  
- The Town Clerk explained that she had also liaised with Hydrock regarding the high quotes received from the tender and referred to an email from Hydrock which had been circulated for Councillors review.
- The Mayor invited the representative from Hydrock to explain why the quotes received were so high and to discuss a way forward.
- The representative from Hydrock explained that his estimate and the costs initially quoted by Tremorfa were for the boiler replacement and hot water cylinder unit only. In his view, the increase in costs from the most recent tenders is likely to be due to additional works within the plant room which have been specified within the tender documents.
- He explained that the reason the additional work was included was to future proof the system because the plant in the boiler room is over 40 years old and contains old pipe work and valves. He suggested that these should be replaced to ensure a brand-new system to prevent further faults and reduce maintenance costs in the long term.
- Members were advised that the technical specification can be rationalised down, however this could increase the risk of future problems with the heating system.
- Cllr S Bletsoe acknowledged that although he did not have an understanding of the technical aspects of the tender documentation, he would like to understand why the cost of a commercial boiler is substantially more than the cost of a new domestic boiler which can cost in the region of £4,500. He enquired if there is anything that prevents residential boilers being installed in a commercial property.
- The representative from Hydrock explained that commercial boilers are modular and have more complexities and controls than a domestic boiler. He highlighted that the Town Hall property has different circuits for different parts of the building.
- Councillors highlighted that the boiler replacement needs to be significantly cheaper than the quotes received.
- The representative from Hydrock explained that in order to create zones to isolate rooms to ensure energy is not wasted, re-plumbing would be required for a domestic boiler installation.
- A discussion took place regarding the additional work included in the specification and the issue caused by a valve that failed at the property in December 2022.
- The representative from Hydrock provided a view that domestic boilers would not be the best option and suggested a small commercial boiler is probably the best option.
- It was highlighted that the existing control panel at the property is very old and prone to issues. Members noted the cost of £18,000 for a replacement panel which was included in the tender specification.
- A discussion took place regarding the KW output of boilers.
- Members highlighted the urgency to find a solution and move into the building.

- The Quantity Surveyor enquired if the Town Council could piggyback on an existing BCBC contract and referred to the All Wales Procurement Framework. It was noted that this is unlikely.
- Cllr N Deere enquired if there could be a cost saving if the Council purchased the boiler directly from the supplier.
- The Quantity Surveyor agreed this could be an option however he highlighted that the Council would not have the same buying power and discounts as the heating companies. He also noted that contractually, the warranty on the boiler usually sits with the installer but if the Council purchases the boiler directly the installer will not provide the warranty therefore if the boiler malfunctions, the Council will have no recourse. He also noted that if the installer is booked to undertake the work and the boiler is delivered late, this will incur additional costs.
- Hydrock was asked to explain the difference in the length of a warranty for a commercial boiler and a residential boiler and agreed to check this.
- The Quantity Surveyor advised that contractually, the warranty with a contractor can be up to 12 years.
- The Architect/Project Manager highlighted that the Council should be mindful that natural gas will eventually be phased out and replaced with hydrogen gas and asked Hydrock to caveat that risk.
- The Architect/Project Manager also asked the Council to consider risk in the long term and referred to the email from Hydrock and additional work included in the tender specification.
- The Mayor commented that the costs received in the tender responses were not acceptable and re-iterated that the Council does not have the budget to go ahead with the cost provided.
- A brief discussion took place regarding the proposed BCBC Heat Network Scheme and it was noted that this would not be available for the Town Council to join in the near future.
- It was noted that it is unlikely that the use of hydrogen will progress quickly and that the Town Council need to address the current situation.
- The Facilities Manager was asked to provide input based on her knowledge of the building from a previous role. She explained that the controls are not easy to use and that she had struggled to get companies to provide partial re-fits and maintenance for the boiler in the past due to its age. She explained that replacement of the plant as a whole would be better but understood the limitations due to cost.
- The representative from Hydrock explained that he would need to check that if the existing controls are to be retained, they will be compatible with a new domestic or commercial boiler.
- Cllr I Spiller suggested that hydrogen and greener options can be explored in the future when budgets are not so pressured and spoke about the Council budget and money required for the wider communities. He enquired if the Council could proceed with residential boilers and suggested upscaling in the future.
- The Architect/Project Manager suggested that the installation of domestic boilers can be explored but the compatibility with existing controls, pipework and radiators will need to be checked thoroughly. He also highlighted that some pipework and radiators were replaced as part of the Phase 1 refurbishment works to work with commercial boilers.
- Cllr I Williams suggested that the Council should agree to progress with the installation of domestic boilers and move forward.
- The Town Clerk referred to the potential issues highlighted regarding the compatibility of existing controls, old valves and pipework and new boilers and asked the consultants if they

could advise the best way forward to update the controls and obtain a low cost heating system.

- A discussion took place regarding pumps, circuits and asbestos.
- Cllr A Felton acknowledged that although the Council wants to find a green solution the cost is prohibitive. She highlighted that with the information currently available she does not feel that Council can make a decision.
- The Mayor highlighted that Council had discussed the situation for over an hour and needed to come to a conclusion.
- Members discussed the potential strip out of the boiler room and the possibility of sweating it out and repairing the existing boiler.
- Cllr A Wathan expressed concern regarding the timeline. He noted that it will be winter in 3 months and that Council need heating in the building by the end of November.
- A discussion took place about arranging temporary heating.
- It was noted that the lease for the Heras fencing expires at the end of September and will need to be renegotiated with Manning Construction.
- The Mayor asked Council if it wished to continue with the current system in the hope of sweating it out or push forward with a replacement boiler.
- It was proposed that the following options are explored:
  - Option 1: Repair the existing boiler
  - Option 2: Explore the possibility of installing domestic boilers
  - Option 3: Explore the possibility of installing lower cost commercial boilers

**RESOLVED:** That the appointed consultants provide a report for Council with the following options:

Option 1: Repair the existing boiler

The Project Manager/Architect will review all the information provided by Manning and Tremorfa on the current boilers, together with the Lorne Stewart last inspection report and put together a written summary of the existing condition and the feasibility, pros and cons of repairing the existing boiler.

Option 2: Domestic Boilers

Hydrock will investigate the most cost-effective domestic boilers on the market that can provide the required heat and hot water loads for the size of the Town Hall building. This includes listing which items in the tender package that can be omitted or changed for cheaper alternatives.

Option 3: Commercial Boilers

Hydrock will investigate the most cost-effective commercial boilers available that can provide the required heat and hot water loads for the size of the Town Hall building. This includes listing which items in the tender package that can be omitted or changed for cheaper alternatives.

*The Mayor thanked invited guests and gave apologies to leave for another appointment.*

*A short recess took place and the invited guests left the meeting.*

*The Deputy Mayor chaired the remainder of the meeting.*

**4. To consider a BCBC consultation regarding the Electoral arrangement review of all Town and Community councils within Bridgend (closing date for responses 30/09/2023)**

- Cllr I Williams suggested that it is unlikely that all Councillors will agree, therefore suggested that Councillors send individual submissions through to the electoral department. Cllr Unwin agreed.

**RESOLVED:** To inform the BCBC Electoral Department that the Town Council will not respond as a whole but that individual Councillors will submit their views separately.

**5. To receive an update on difficulties finding a 30ft Christmas tree for Bridgend Town Centre and consider options available**

- Members reviewed a report of possible options provided by the Facilities Officer.
- Cllr Unwin thanked staff for their efforts investigating suppliers for large Christmas trees.
- He suggested that Council would need to find a supplier and make a decision by early September and that if the maximum height that can be sourced is only 20ft or 25ft that will have to be acceptable.
- It was noted that it would be difficult to store an artificial tree.
- The Facilities Officer highlighted that it is possible to source a tree from Yorkshire, however the transportation cost is £2,000.
- Cllr I Spiller did not support the carbon footprint of sourcing a tree from Yorkshire.
- Members discussed and agreed a maximum budget of £2,500 for the supply and transportation of a Christmas tree for Bridgend Town Centre.
- Cllr A Lloyd advised that she had a connection in Port Talbot and would contact them. She also explained an idea about putting memorial plaques on the tree.
- Cllr Unwin advised that the Council had arranged wrapped parcels on the tree previously however these had been damaged.
- It was noted that the Facilities Manager had spoken to a company that are due to provide a response to her by the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of August. This company provides trees for other local Town and Community Councils.

**RESOLVED:** To approve a budget of £2,500 with some flexibility and delegated authority to the Town Clerk in liaison with the Chair of Finance to order a large Christmas Tree for Bridgend Town Centre and to await responses from suppliers and make a decision in early September.

Meeting closed at 11.41am

Signed .....

Date .....

Mayor