**GROSMONT FAWR COMMUNITY COUNCIL**

**DRAFT CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES**

**MONDAY 12TH JULY 2021**

**Meeting held via Zoom**

**Present:**

C Cllr David Hughes-Jones Chairman Cllr Andrew Farr – Vice Chairman

Cllr Jim Bevan Cllr Peter McVann

Cllr Witek Mintowt-Czyz Cllr James Stark

Cllr Paul Sheridan

**In attendance:**

Mrs Debs Neville

Mrs Jane Moggridge Ms Clare Preece – Clerk

1. **To accept apologies:**

Cllr Mrs Margie Barker, Cllr Martin Davies

1. **To disclose personal and pecuniary interests in items of business listed below:**

The Chairman added that he wanted to remind Councillors not to be late to the meetings. No personal or pecuniary were disclosed.

1. **Public Forum:**

The meeting was suspended to permit the Public Forum. 10 minutes only and each participant limited to 2 minutes. The meeting was then re-opened.

Mrs Jane Moggridge said that the dog biting incident at Tresenny had become more serious with an incident having been reported to the police. Cllr Sheridan said that now the time has come to do something about this and he will be chasing the matter up with the police. The Chairman agreed that the police are more equipped to deal with such matters.

1. **To approve as a correct record the Minutes of previous meetings held:**

**RESOLVED:** The Minutes of the Annual and May Council meeting were approved unanimously.

1. **To receive the survey of the Town Hall conducted by Mark Nicholls MRICS of Alcocks, Nicholls, Stewart and ask questions:**

Councillors had been asked to submit questions for Mark Nicholls prior to the meeting but as none were forthcoming Mark Nicholls was not asked to attend.

A survey of the Town Hall had been carried out and this had been forwarded to Councillors via email. A plan of action needs to be formulated to tackle the repairs and maintenance of the historical community asset.

Councillors are to discuss a way forward and this was dealt with under Item 12 on the Agenda.

1. **To consider matters relating to the Grosmont Futures project – The Grosmont**

**Hub: (To receive Cllr Mintowt-Czyz’s report):**

The Clerk took advice from One Voice Wales, the Council’s legal support and Clerking colleagues in South Wales regarding the proposed Management Committee to run the Community Hub. The advice was unanimous. It is advisable that Grosmont Futures become an independent charitable organisation who will be governed by the Charitable Commission and therefore will be able to carry out the management of the proposed hub independently whilst fulfilling the requirements laid down by statue and Welsh Audit. To construct a management committee using the legislation in the format they propose will not be acceptable. The Clerk has sent Cllr Mintowt-Czyz the legislation as advised by the ALCC and asked to formulate a partnership agreement using the legislation laid down in statute. The Clerk asked the Councillors why he was reluctant to set up and independent charity to facilitate the formulation of a Management committee he said that it was because of the workload involved. The Clerk attended a meeting to discuss the management proposal, called by Grosmont Futures and she and Alex Minford were the only participants. The rest of the committee and their advisor, Peter Willis were not present. Alex said that he would be tweaking the agreement to take on board the advice the Clerk gave. The Community Council would have the responsibility going forward to maintain the fabric of the building and would act as Landlords. Other Council’s who have this kind of agreement in place usually charge a rent for the use of their building, but as discussed with Alex Minford, a business plan had not yet been drawn up so it was not known if the project would be profitable at this stage. The Community Council will forgo £2.8K in hall charges which it must be agreed is very reasonable consideration on the part of the Community Council to see the project succeed. Alex said that he thought any profit would be ploughed back into the project to build reserves. One Voice Wales advised that projects to benefit the community run independently could be funded in part by a grant given by the council under the current Power of Wellbeing spending (to be revoked in May 2022 and replaced by the General Power of Competence for qualifying councils or reverting back to s137 expenditure for those who do not qualify), if the council so wished, taking account of the money it would have to raise via the Precept for the repair and maintenance of the Town Hall. It must be stressed that the council does not have a bottomless pit of money and monies raised via the Precept have to be justified to the WHOLE of the electorate. Of course, matters surrounding Grants will be discussed when the budget is set in January 2022. All income is accounted for in this current financial year. If this proposed way forward is taken then a legal partnership agreement will have to be set up between Grosmont Futures and the Community Council by a solicitor experienced in land and buildings. There is no cheap alternative and the Clerk recommends that counsel be sought outside the area as far afield as Cheltenham and Gloucester to access the required level of competence. The latest state of play surrounding this, and following hours of work responding to emails from the Grosmont Futures Group the Clerk believes a way ahead has been identified by Alex Minford. He suggests that the group set up as CHARITABLE INCORPORATED ORGANISATION which was the recommendation of the GWENT ASSOCIATION OF VOLUNTARY ORGAINISATIONS. The Clerk was pointed in the direction of the Town Clerk at Chepstow Town Council who has a number of community buildings all managed using this model.

It is stressed that the organisation of the partnership agreement is in its early stages and Councillor Farr has made some important points to the Clerk to be considered when reaching the decision on a way forward. These include, the Community Council overseeing any building work to be carried out to it’s asset, the Grade II listed building. Cllr Farr commented that he had seen no plans with regard to the project and no business plan for the completed Community Hub.

Cllr Mintowt-Czyz had provided Councillors with a copy of his report representing the views of the Grosmont Futures Group the day before the meeting and he expressed his apologies for the lateness of his submission.

He said that the work input from the Clerk had been invaluable and that there was strong support from Grosmont Futures that the group become a Charitable Incorporated organisation synergistically.

There was much discussion surrounding the proposals and at times some bafflement with regard to whether or not the proposal put forward by the Clerk and the views of the Councillor would enable there to be a collaboration between the Council and Grosmont Futures. Cllr Mintowt-Czyz said that the subject of the Draft Management agreement had stimulated much debate and he had come to the view that the Clerk’s advice was pertinent.

Cllr Stark said that he wanted to question whether the grants being applied for would in fact become available when size was taken into account. He said that the activities of the Grosmont futures group should be completely separate from the Community Council whose main responsibility will be to maintain the building. Cllrs Jim Bevan, Peter McVann and Paul Sheridan agreed.

C Cllr David Hughes-Jones said that the Council will still be the Landlords and will remain as owners and maintain the building. Cllr Jim Bevan was in agreement and voiced concerns over how long he thought the Grosmont Futures project would be supported by its volunteers. Cllr Mintowt-Czyz said that the Community Council did not have the power to mandate how Grosmont Futures set themselves up. Cllr Farr was concerned that the project will be a flash in the pan and asked whether there will be other enthusiastic people to take the place of those who may drop out. He also said that the Council’s Precept is not to be used to subsidise activities taking place in the village. Cllr Farr said that the grant fund of £140k is a substantial sum and asked if any of it will be put towards the repair and maintenance of the building. Cllr Paul Sheridan said that the money will be used to pursue activities to tackle rural isolation and poverty not for refurbishment of an asset belonging to another body. Routine maintenance will be funded by the grant.

The Councillors were asked if they were happy to support the Grosmont Futures Management committee if it was set up as Charitable Incorporated Organisation **RESOLVED:** Councillors unanimously agreed to support this way forward.

1. To consider matters arising from the minutes.
2. Dog Fouling – There was an incident where a number of residents in Poorscript Lane had made complaints to the Grosmont Notice Board Facebook page about an increase in dog fouling in the area. The Clerk made the residents aware that reports would be taken seriously by MCC and that fixed penalty fines could be imposed if the perpetrators identified. The Clerk also asked MCC for more signage to be put in place by MCC in the area. Does anybody know if this has been installed yet**? RESOLVED:** This has not yet been carried out

There is still no option for Dog waste bin emptying in the village. The Clerk will attend the next Dog fouling action day and has offered to co-ordinate a dog waste action group in the village but no volunteers have come forward.

1. Public toilets -John C Rogers solicitor for Monmouthshire County Council wrote to the Clerk on 1st June 2021 to say that he would be contacting the owners of the Angel Inn to explain that the current tenants are not entitled to the public toilet grant payable to Grosmont Community Council. The matter of the covenant drawn up between Monmouthshire County Council (the owners of the toilets situated adjacent to the Angel Inn) and the owners of the Angel Inn, Mr and Mrs Woolnough, would be dealt with by John C Rogers with a view to releasing them from the agreement and offering the premises to them at current market value. John C Roger wrote to the Clerk on 7/7/2021 and informed her that the Angel Inn has been sold to Mr Jim Hamliton and Ms Chloe Skinner but that the Freehold had been retained. Mr Woolnough was not prepared to make a realistic offer for the release of the covenant and it will remain in place. He is fully aware the public toilet grant will not be paid to him or the new owners of the business.

The public toilet signage appears to have been adjusted so that it points in the direction of the toilets in the under croft. Have Councillors noticed it being moved? **RESOLVED**: Nobody has noticed this being done

During the month the lock on the public toilet was broken and Steven Spyrangle replaced it at a cost of £70 (payment agreed by Councillors).

1. Fire Risk assessment review points – due to the heavy workload of the Clerk this month this item will be carried forward to the next council meeting.
2. The Broken Footbridge in Llangua – due to the heavy workload of the Clerk this month this matter is carried forward to be investigated. The Clerk has noticed a file containing historic information which will have to be examined when the time is available.

1. To consider matters relating to Web Content Access Guidelines WCAG 2.1 Following the results of the structural survey the Clerk has held off spending money on this project. The budget spend report will be discussed in the closed session of the council.
2. To receive items of correspondence. Schedule of correspondence sent to Councillors for their approval prior to the meeting. Do Councillors agree with the schedule? **RESOLVED:** Councillors agree the schedule
3. To consider matters relating to Highways/Rural Roads.

Wood Farm is being patched and resurfaced. Caggle Street in Llanvetherine must be done before winter. Cllr Jim Bevan said that the B4521 must be sorted out. One stretch of road between Campton and Whitehouse Farm towards Abergavenny needs resurfacing. Cllr Peter McVann said, with respect to the verges on the B4347, narrow roads are being done before the wider ones which means that two lane roads are fast becoming single lane. He added that the area of road between the bridges where the spillage occurred needs attention as it is becoming potholed. Two illegal road signs have also appeared in the 20mph zone near to the Lawns Cottages.

1. To consider matters relating to planning. None to consider
2. To consider matters relating to Grosmont Town Hall including usage of electricity by the community.

 The surveyors report highlighted in brief costs as outlined:

1. Urgent Works - £15,500
2. 6 months to 1 year - £28,000
3. 1 to 5 years - £18,350
4. 10 years plus - £28,500

Alcock, Nicholls and Stewart offer an all encompassing service which will meet all the requirements of the Council from finding suitable contractors to project management.

The Council will need to fund this and a copy of the budget spend to date was emailed to Councillors highlighting areas where funds may be redirected into the building repairs pot of £2.800 approx.

The Clerk has already applied for one grant from the National lottery in conjunction with IKEA – Places like home fund for the full amount available - £5000 and will hear whether this application has been successful in October.

Due to time constraints placed on the Clerk dealing with matters detracting from Council business she has so far spoken to the Architectural Heritage Society for Wales to discuss further funding and has a lot of information which needs to be studied in order to source further funding.

It is imperative that work is carried out sooner rather than later as costs will increase as the building deteriorates further.

The Councilllors to discuss a way forward:

The question as to how the work would be funded was posed. The Precept will not fund the repairs. Cllr Mintowt-Czyz said that the vast majority of the money would come from grants but the grant from the Green Energy fund cannot be used to subsidize the work.

**RESOLVED:** Cllr Stark to assist the clerk with grant applications especially with building terminology.

On 14/6/2021 at 12.54pm the Clerk informed the Councillors that extension leads had been discovered plugged into the electricity supply in the Town Hall leading to the exterior of the building. The Clerks duties as Responsible Financial Officer means she has the STATUTORY DUTY to ensure that the financial administration of the council complies with Accounts and Audit Wales regulations Act 2014. As part of this act the council has adopted financial regulations which include measures to provide for the safe and efficient safeguarding of public money and to prevent and detect inaccuracy and fraud.

Cllr Mrs M Barker wrote to the Council on 15/6/2021 at 15.02pm to inform them that it had been the Councillors husband’s decision to use the electricity at the Town Hall to power amplifiers for a music gig on Sunday 13th June at the Angel Inn. He has stated that this practice is one which has been an acceptable practice in the past. Despite this, the Clerk was not informed by Councillors that they knew of this between 14/6/2021 at 12.54pm and 15.02pm despite emails passing between the Clerk and Councillors regarding the matter when the Clerk was commended for having taken action, publicly asking for information by way of a facebook post and reporting the matter to the police. Reference will be made here that the post asked for information also to the damage that was said to have been done to the main front door. The damage was reported to the Clerk by the surveyor who just so happened to be at the Town Hall on the morning that the leads were discovered. In days following the event the Clerk tested the door and it was found that it did not open from the outside if it had been deadlocked from the inside and the surveyor was mistaken in reporting that the lock the had been broken.

If Councillors wish to allow the public to use the electricity from the Town Hall it will have to do so formally. The Councillors will also have to take into account the HEALTH AND SAFETY ISSUES THIS THROWS UP. It must be stressed that A BREACH of HEALTH AND SAFETY WILL LEAD TO THE NULIFYING OF ANY INSURANCE IN CASE OF AN ACCIDENT AND FINES IF REPORTED TO THE HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE. The Clerk is not sure as yet to the effect this may have on the Fire Risk Assessment and whether another one will have to be carried out costing another £300 plus VAT. The Council would also risk an enforcement notice being served on it by the South Wales Fire Brigade if it was found not to be complying with Fire Safety policy.

A Smart Meter has been installed at the Town Hall which will be able to monitor the precise time the electricity has been used.

In the course of these events the Clerk has consulted her governing bodies and the police who pointed out that security at the building was not sufficient. The Clerk reported to them that the Council had not budgeted for CCTV and following on has changed the combinations to the key holders. It has been pointed out to the Clerk that anybody wishing to bypass these procedures could have ample opportunity to have a key cut for their own personal use but there is no feasible way to get round this. Users integrity will have to be relied upon.

Do Councillors wish the electricity supply to be accessed by authorised members of the public for outdoor events using extension leads from now on?

Much discussion was had. Cllr Mintowt-Czyz said that “CUSTOM AND PRACTICE” should be considered when discussing this matter and he said it should be able to continue with specifics laid down and understood unless it was a profit making event.

Cllr Farr said that Councillors must understand that we now live in the 21st century and that there is legislation that must be adhered to. At no time has the use of electricity syphoning been approved officially. Cllr Jim Bevan said that if something went wrong ie a fire or accident then the Council would be held accountable and on that basis the practice must stop. Cllr Mintowt-Czyz argued that those hiring the hall could be given access to the electricity supply. The Chairman asked for a decision.

**RESOLVED**: The Chair had the casting vote and it was decided NOT to allow the Town Hall electricity to be used in future for events outside the Town Hall

1. To consider matters relating to Grosmont Events. NHS frontline workers day and Summer event.

 A really super event took place on 5th July. The Grosmont

NHS frontline workers day and Summer event. A really super event took place on 5th July. The Grosmont Church Bells were tolled and a two minutes silence was observed to remember all those who lost their lives to the pandemic. The Chairman made a speech celebrating the work of the NHS and frontline workers and a toast was raised. Photographs of the event were posted to the Council’s facebook page. Thanks go out to Cllr Mrs Margie Barker and Sarah Phillips and all those involved in the organisation of the event which included home made cakes and a fabulous colouring competition saying Thank You to the NHS by local children. There are some bottles of Cava left over from the event and the Clerk suggests that they be donated to Grosmont Events Summer Event on 31st where it is also requested that a Councillor present the raffle prizes at 1pm. **RESOLVED:** Councillors voted to donate the Cava to the event but nobody was available to present the raffle prizes.

1. To agree expenditure and other accounts matters.

As per audit requirements all details of payments requiring approval were sent to Councillors during the month by email. Do Councillors approve all payments that have been made since the last meeting? **RESOLVED**: All payments were approved

Do Councillors approve the payment of Mark Nicholls’ invoice - £960 (including £160 VAT) **RESOLVED:** Payment approved

Do Councillors approve the Bank Reconciliation for June sent via email **RESOLVED:** Councillors approved the bank reconciliation

To receive and discuss the budget spend to date **RESOLVED:** The budget was approved

1. To receive and consider any other business (Items for noting only – matters requiring further consideration and will be listed for a future council meeting.)

Cllr Peter McVann said that he had not been aware that the banner advertising the Grosmont Hub had been erected and felt that they were jumping the gun a bit. He also asked how it had been attached as it may not comply with the regulations around Listed Buildings. Cllr Stark said it had been nailed in place.

1. Closed session of the Council to consider matters arising from the Internal audit and staffing matters.

Meeting closed at 9.30pm. The next meeting will be on Monday 13th September 2021