**GROSMONT FAWR COMMUNITY COUNCIL**

**DRAFT CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES SEPTEMBER 13TH 2021**

**MEETING TOOK PLACE IN THE GROSMONT TOWN HALL**

**Present**

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

Cllr Jim Bevan Cllr Peter McVann

Cllr Witek Mintowt-Czyz Cllr Paul Sheridan

Cllr James Stark

**In attendance**

Mrs Jane Moggridge Mrs Debs Neville

Mrs Clare Preece – Clerk Mr Gwilym Ripon - ALCC Union

1. **To accept apologies for absence**: Cllr Mrs Margie Barker, Cllr Martin Davies was on his way as per the Chairman at the start of the meeting.
2. **To disclose personal and pecuniary interests in items of business listed below:** The Chairman disclosed his interest in his planning application if it were to come up at the meeting.
3. **Public Forum** – (The meeting will be suspended to permit the Public Forum – 10 minutes only and each participant limited to 2 minutes. The meeting will then be re-opened.) Mrs Jane Moggridge said that the dog waste bin at the Church had now been removed and that meant that there were no bins in the village for the purpose of disposing of dog waste.
4. **To approve as a correct record the Minutes of previous meetings held.** To approve the Minutes of the July meeting and the extraordinary meeting of the 16th August.

**Resolved:** The minutes of the previous meeting and the extraordinary meeting were approved by a majority vote.

1. **To consider matters relating to the Grosmont Futures Project – The Grosmont Hub** – To receive Councillors Mintowt-Czyz’s report and discuss.

Cllr Mintowt-Czyz’s report had been circulated to Councillors prior to the meeting to enable it to be discussed.

Peter Willis has asked that the distribution of overheads between the Grosmont Futures Community Hub and the Council be discussed and an email was forwarded to Councillors on 8th September for consideration. Alex Minford has suggested that the allocation of overheads will only make sense in the context of what revenues can be expected and he recommends they model 2-3 scenarios. This is detail of the discussion to date.

Cllr Stark said that in relation to the variable costs such as electricity and water, the council itself will use very little. Cllr Farr said that the council in effect will be letting Grosmont Futures have use of the hall free of charge and would hope that the council meetings will be allowed to go ahead free of charge. This agreement should include any extra ordinary meetings which may take place. He added that legal advice should be sought to examine the partnership agreement on behalf of the council before the Draft Partnership agreement is signed. Cllr Mintowt-Czyz said that consenting now to the Draft Partnership agreement means nothing and does not prevent the council from amending it.

The Clerk said she had already identified a firm of solicitors who were sufficiently experienced to draw up a lease agreement. The Clerk had not yet taken advantage of the free hour of advice offered. Cllr Mintowt-Czyz said that the grant funder has stipulated that the lease should be of a minimum term of 10 years. The Clerk said that there would be some legal consideration to undertake a lease of 10 years and that she will with Council approval, seek advice from a lawyer as she is not certain of the what the council’s position will be if it agrees to that length of time. The Chairman said he is happy to agree In principal but that the decision is subject to legal advice sought by the Clerk. **RESOLVED:** The Clerk is to obtain legal advice before the Council agrees to the Draft partnership agreement with Grosmont Futures.

1. **To consider matters arising from the minutes.**

Dog Fouling: Merlin waste have said that their plan for the future includes improved vehicles but there is no firm commitment that any dog waste collection service will be provided to the area.

Fire Risk Assessment review points: Ongoing time constraints have hindered the progress.

Broken footbridge at Llangua: Ongoing. Time constraints have hindered the progress.

1. **To consider matters relating to Web Content Access Guidelines WCAG 2.** The Clerk has reinstated the use of a web page supplied by IONOS 1&1 at the cost of £18 in order to publish the minutes electronically, (a statutory requirement), without having to use Council funds which may be required to be diverted to the Town Hall repair cost centre. The Clerk is experiencing difficulty in setting up the page not having had web design experience. Has anybody got any experience of this? A fee will be required to be paid out to set this up if nobody comes forward. **RESOLVED:** The Clerk is to place adverts on the Village Website, Facebook page and notice board asking for assistance.
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? The Chairman asked if there was anything on the schedule that the Councillors wanted to discuss at the meeting. The Clerk suggested they discuss the Queens Jublilee and consider it as a community fund raising exercise as well as a celebration of the the Queens reign. The Chairman agreed to it being brought to the next meeting.Councillors attention is drawn to the email dated 12/8/2021 forwarded to Councillors on 16/8/2021 from Tylee Perry entitled Draft Local elections (Communities) (Wales) Rules 2021 containing the consultation documents they have been asked to complete. **RESOLVED:** The Councillors agreed the schedule.
3. **To consider matters relating to Highways/Rural Roads**.

Cllr Farr said he was pleased to see that the end of the straight mile to Grosmont Wood has been repaired but now the issue is with speed on that road. Cllr Sheridan said that quite frequently, when diversions are set up it is often the case that the road marked as a diversion are also blocked and he is concerned about Emergency Vehicles not being able to get through. Cllr Farr stated that it was quite often the case when Dwr Cymru dig up the road the works are not carried out the same day with days in between the workers coming back to finish the job causing un-necessary disruption. Cllr Peter McVann said that he had not received any notification with regards to road closures recently. The Clerk said that she would establish a contact so that road closure information would be brought to Councillors attention in a timely manner. **RESOLVED:** The Chair made notes to report on these matters.

1. **To consider matters relating to planning**. There were no planning applications outstanding and the Clerk asked Councillors to reply to planning applications sent throughout the month as at the moment only one Councillor is making the effort to comment. Cllr Farr said that he often waited to see what local members had to say about an application before making his comment. **RESOLVED:** Councillors to respond to planning applications in a timely manner.
2. **To consider the formation of a sub-committee to deal with grant applications in respect of the repairs to the Grosmont Town Hall** (as per the email to Councillors for consideration prior to the meeting.

Cllr Stark has compared the two building quotes obtained using the surveyors report to kick off the work required by the sub-committee to apply for grants to repair and maintain the Town Hall. A sub-committee must now be formed to deal with this. It will be prudent if the committee is formed of at least three Councillors.

A grant from the Monmouthshire building society which requires details of a tangible project has been identified and the Clerk has spoken with the manager who is keen we submit an application when a tangible project (ie rainwater goods with detailed costings) has been identified and formulated by the sub-committee.

Please see below under item 12 information which pertains to the repairs and maintenance of the Grosmont Town Hall.

Cllr Stark said it was vitally important for any work carried out by builders to be overseen by the sub-committee.

Cllr Farr said that come the elections all those currently on the sub-committee could very well have all gone and the Chairman said that due to the boundary review he would not be able to stand.

Cllr Stark said money is the biggest issue.

Gwilym Ripon asked the Chairman if he could add something and he was given the go ahead. If the Council got permission to apply for a Public Works Loan and took out a loan of say £150,000 the repayments could be spread over 50 years at a cost of £6600 per annum.

Cllr Farr said that in the past it had been frowned upon to build up reserves. Gwilym Ripon added so long as the reserves were earmarked then there would not be a problem. He also suggested a sinking fund to save towards the repayments and said that there should be at least £6.5K in reserves this year if the council had followed best practice in building reserves of 50% per annum of the precept.

A discussion was had with regards who would make up the sub-committee.  **RESOLVED:** Cllr James Stark, Cllr Andrew Farr and Cllr Peter McVann will form the main sub-committee with Cllr Paul Sheridan to cover if somebody is absent.

1. **To consider matters relating to Grosmont Town Hall**
2. The Clerk had a lengthy discussion with Jonathan Morgan from the Heritage Department at Monmouthshire County Council regarding the condition of the Town Hall and the possibility of funding from the principal council. Monmouthshire are not funding any such projects and there is a current plan of 5% austerity year on year. In Wales there has been a lot of money given out to support community hub projects, many of which have failed.

In Jonathan’s opinion to qualify for grants the Council will have to show its commitment to Community engagement and it must gain community support for the project. The Council will be more likely to succeed in it’s grant applications if it builds relationships with it’s community and gets involved in charity fund raising events. The Council will need to demonstrate that the facility is used and that it supports its use by raising money. If there is a sense of community, it has shown that the involvement of the community, where there are local people involved in the building trade etc will normally negate the need to raise money to repair and maintain buildings as the local community are invested in it’s future.

Jonathan knows the Grosmont Town Hall and suggested that something like a pop up coffee shop or farmers market could be held in the undercroft to attract people from outside the area and raise money towards the repair and maintenance costs.

The Clerk has also considered the worse case scenario where the cost of repairs cannot be met. Selling the Town Hall is not an option as it would be very difficult to derive a value. If it was to be sold privately a buyer would have great difficulty obtaining planning permission to convert or change its use to private dwelling for instance. Many historical buildings in Wales are falling foul of lack of money for repairs.

An option, if grant monies can not be raised, would be to obtain a Public Works Loan from the Treasury. For Welsh Community Councils borrowing approval must be obtained from the Welsh Government. When considering whether to apply for a borrowing approval, the council will need to be fully open and transparent with their residents and taxpayers in their dealings. This could include discussions of proposals in open meetings, and ensuring information is available for the public before and after a decision is taken, for example, published in local newsletters. The Local Government Act 2003 states that Community councils may borrow money a) for any purpose relevant to its functions under any enactment b) for the purposes of the prudent management of its financial affairs. Full details can be found following the link below and if this is a route Councillors wish to examine they should be completely familiar with the information contained in the Welsh government document.

<https://gov.wales/borrowing-approvals-guidance-community-and-town-councils-html>

FURTHER DISCUSSIONS RELATING TO THE TOWN HALL

Cllr Stark said he thought it rather extravagant for the Grosmont Futures Community Hub group to get an architect involved at this early stage. Cllr Farr said that he has concerns over the instruction of an architect because as Landlords, the Community Council needs to know what is happening as it may not approve the alterations to the Community building it owns. Cllr Stark would like to know what brief has been given and Cllr Mintowt-Czyz said that it was no secret and was happy to share the information. He also added that whilst both parties have a common interest the residual in the Grosmont Futures earmarked fund is not to be clawed back as it is a stipulation of the grant application that the Council have agreed to support it with this funding.

Cllr Farr said that the Council have forgone £2.8K in town hall hire charges that could have been used to fund the repairs and that the two groups need to work together with a mutually agreed process.

1. When the Clerk attended the extraordinary meeting at the Town Hall on 16th August it was pointed out that the fire door fitted by Steven Spyrangle no longer fitted correctly and Cllr Farr asked the Clerk to contact Steven with a view to him attending the Town Hall to plane it down. Cllr Farr asked if there would be a charge for this and following contact being made with Steven is was ascertained that there will be a charge dependent on how long the job takes and Steven said he would attend to it as soon as he could.
2. The Caretaker was on annual leave during the week commencing 23rd August and

upon her return on Thursday 26th August she found the door in the undercroft and

door to the toilets in the undercroft propped open with traffic cones. The Clerk has

asked Councillors if they know anything about it and supplied them with the

photographs she was sent. No information has been forthcoming. It must be stressed again

that there must be no unauthorised use of Town Hall facilities. Importantly there is a

strict policy whereby, to allow use of the public facilities by Hall hirers the Council

have had to draw up a risk assessment policy as laid down by Welsh Government

which must be signed by everyone who books the hall. Unauthorised use is in

breach of the this and Councillors are asked to do whatever they can to tackle the

problem.

Cllr Stark said that no doubt a key had been cut and this was used to enter the Town

Hall whilst the caretaker was away.

The new door and lock are 3 years old.

Cllr McVann suggested a combination lock be put in place on the door to negate the

need for a key.

**RESOLVED:** Nothing can be done as nobody has any information as to who has

entered and used Town Hall facilities without permission.

1. The Clerk has received bookings from Patrick Boyd to hold a Yoga class and the

Bridge Club who are restarting their sessions.

1. Cllr Farr asked if the light sensor in the undercroft was working and the Clerk told the meeting that the Caretaker had also noticed it was not working and was attempting to reset the timer. **RESOLVED:** Cllr Farr will speak to the electrician with a view to getting it fixed.

1. **To consider matters relating to Grosmont Events**. Nothing to report
2. **To agree expenditure and other accounts matters.**

Bank reconciliations for July and August have been completed and will be sent to the Chair for approval.

Notices were put up on the noticeboards on 2nd August 2021 in Grosmont and Llangua and on the Councils Facebook page promoting the Electors right to exercise their rights to inspect the accounts between between 20th August 2021 and 17th September 2021 in line with Audit Wales regulations.

The following payments have been made during the period from the date of the July meeting:

26/7/21 Clerks wages £541.67

16/8/21 Caretaker £292.78

16/8/21 SLCC £120

16/8/21 FireRite £60.72

23/8/21 SWALEC £158.25

25/8/21 Clerks wages £541.67

1/9/21 Clerks Exps £256.89

3/9/21 Clerks Exps £42.20

Monies received

31/8/21 Precept £6500

On behalf of Grosmont Futures Community Hub Project

6/9/21 Green Energy Grant £10,400

Do Councillors approve the above **DECISION REQUIRED:** Councillors approved the payments and an additional payment to Sue Price for the Bat survey totalling £512.00

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**.) None noted
2. **Closed session of the Council to consider matters arising from the Internal audit and staffing matters**:

The Chairman said that it was nice to be back following the restrictions placed by the pandemic with so many people in attendance.

The meeting was closed at 21.35

The next meeting will take place in the Grosmont Town Hall on Monday 8th November at 7.30pm