**GROSMONT COMMUNITY COUNCIL**

**CYNGOR CYMUNED GROSMONT**

**Chairman/Cadeirydd Clerk/Clerc**

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**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE GROSMONT COMMUNITY COUNCIL HELD AT THE GROSMONT TOWN HALL AT 7:30 PM ON THE 12TH JULY 2023**

Those attending the meeting: Councillors Lowri Wynn Morgan (Chair), Janet Williams, Jamie Edwards, Margaret Barker and the Clerk to the Council, Robert Wade. On the floor of the meeting were Susanna Jones, Peter Clarke and Russell James.

1. **To accept apologies for absence**

Councillors Jude Rogers, Witek Mintowt-Czyz and Christopher Bateman gave their apologies. County Council David Hughes-Jones, whilst ex-officio, also sent apologies for his absence.

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

It was agreed that these could be announced as and when the situation arose during the meeting.

1. **Discussion on matters arising from the Police Report and police issues generally**

The report had been circulated by e-mail previously. No issues arose. The Clerk said that he had put the report through Google Translator to see if a suitable Welsh translation could be procured, and the Chair said that she had seen it and that it was very good and could be used so that the entire report could be published.

1. **To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the Meeting on the 14th June 2023**

The Minutes of the Meeting on the 14th June 2023 were approved as a correct record.

1. **To consider matters arising from the Minutes of the Meeting on the 14th June 2023**
2. Page 2 – 5(a) – The Chair said that she had been unable as yet to speak to the Cleaner. She intended to do so to clarify her contract. It was agreed that the Clerk should purchase a “Henry” vacuum-cleaner. Some concern was expressed over the issue of when the toilets were open. It had been agreed that they should in principle be left open permanently. It was accepted that there might sometimes be occasions – such as one which the Cleaner had raised with the Clerk recently – when they were left in an undesirable state, but it was considered that this was not so frequent as to cause the toilets to be locked. However, the Cleaner should be asked to keep a record so that the issue could be kept under review.
3. Page 2 – 6(c) – The Chair said she had received a response from Cadw to an e-mail of complaint from her about the mowing of the ground around the Castle. It was in Welsh, and her concern was over one particular word which might have suggested that the situation might be reviewed “soon” or, in a literal translation, “before long”, which obviously meant that there could be quite a delay. Either way, she intended to write to press for action. The present situation was causing difficulty for the elderly and disabled and for dog-owners who wished to clear up dog mess but were unable to find it in the long grass. There was now a sign up in the grounds warning of Lyme Disease, which was caused by tick bites. The Chair said she had been to Skenfrith, which was not so bad; from the floor, Russell James said that it was managed by the National Trust as well as Cadw. The approach of the Kentchurch Estate was also contrasted favourably with that of Cadw acting alone.
4. **To consider the progress of the work relating to the Town Hall Project**

The Chair referred to the Finance meeting which took place on the 6th and said that it was going to be necessary to amend the Partnership Agreement (PA), which had originally been drafted purely for the purposes of the NLCF grant, but was now going to have to cover the whole of the Project and its funding from here on. The Clerk commented that it might be necessary to have a totally different agreement or section of the PA to cover the situation that would obtain once the building and renovation had been completed and the work of operating the Town Hall as a business got under way.

Under the PA, Peter Clarke as Project Manager was required to ask the Steering Committee for permission to expend funds, although strictly speaking it was the Council (and each individual Councillor) who were responsible for making sure public money was spent properly, and so, because the Council only met once a month, some mechanism was going to have to be devised to facilitate decisions which were going to become more frequent. Peter Clarke mentioned as examples the competing quotes which Sarah Browne the Architect was obtaining for solar panels, lifts and doors. For the present, it was agreed that the Clerk should pay under purchase order number 5 - £80 – and should also make a formal request for a quotation for future work by Coast 2 Coast.

The Chair said that she and Clerk would prepare a draft of a new PA which would be put before the Council at the next meeting, which would be in September. It was hoped that this would not cause unmanageable delay.

1. **To discuss Grosmont Online**

The Chair read out a brief report from Councillor Rogers, who said that the newsletter was making progress with some more subscribers. She and the Clerk would meet in the Autumn to discuss updates to the web-site and calendar.

1. **To receive items of correspondence**

The Clerk said that there were no items not already covered by other aspects of the Agenda.

1. **To consider matters relating to Planning.**

The Council considered one application:

DM/2023/00880 – The School House - an application for retrospective permission for minor alterations to a listed building. This application was agreed.

The Clerk said that another application (DM/2023/00821 – Whitney Villa) had appeared in his e-mails the day before the meeting, but the Monmouthshire County Council web-site had malfunctioned and he had been unable to send the documents through. He distributed hard copies of the Consultation Letter (this would also be sent to Councillors by e-mail) and invited Councillors to access the web-site in a few days by which time the problem should have been rectified. If they had any views, they could notify him and he would in turn inform the County Council. This was agreed in principle to be a way of approaching a somewhat unusual occurrence.

1. **To agree expenditure and other accounts matters**

The Chair said that the Clerk had been granted a pay-rise to £9,750 per annum, back-dated to January which was when the issue had first been raised but had been postponed a number of times. The Clerk produced a sheet, which he said he would distribute to Councillors not present, which showed that he was owed £1,989.58 as of July 2023, going back to January 2022. However, there was considerable concern when he said that as a result he had calculated that the Council owed HMRC a considerable amount in Income Tax. The confusion had arisen because the former Clerk had not paid any Income Tax since she was below the tax threshold. The Clerk said he would check on the situation and would correspond with HMRC at his discretion, bearing in mind that they had not pressed for any payment. The Council also agreed travel expenses based on 45 pence per mile, so that the payment for the four meetings just undertaken was £93.60.

1. **To discuss the state of the roads in and about Grosmont**

The continuing concern of the community over the state of the roads was expressed by several Councillors. The Chair said that County Councillor David Hughes-Jones had reported to her that there were no current funds available to deal with the issues the Council had raised, especially regarding the bridge at the bottom of Cupid’s Hill and Hand Road. Several Councillors pointed out the potential danger of a bridge that was already in a deleterious state and was used by heavy vehicles in general and those from the Pontrilas Saw-mill in particular. A weight limit might be a possible solution, but it was recognized that this was a main thoroughfare, and that closing the bridge would involve a considerable detour. The Clerk was requested to write to the County Council with regards to this issue, and also to the Welsh Government. Several Councillors compared the roads in the Monmouthshire County Council area unfavourably with roads to the north and west of the county, and also in mid-Wales.

13. **To discuss Footpaths**

No particular issues arose**.**

1. **To receive and consider any other business**

Favourable comment was made about the Village Day on the 1st July, which had clearly been enjoyed, and in particular the human Fruit Machine.

**15. To decide the date of the next meeting**

There was not going to be a meeting in August. The second Wednesday in September was the day specified in Standing Orders. This would be the **13th September.** The Chair said that Wednesdays might be a problem for her, so it was agreed that, if, by the end of August, it was clear that there was going to be a difficulty, she should notify all Councillors by e-mail, and a mutually convenient alternative date could be arranged.