**GROSMONT COMMUNITY COUNCIL**

**CYNGOR CYMUNED GROSMONT**

**Chairman/Cadeirydd Clerk/Clerc**

**Councillor Lowri Wynn Morgan Mr R Wade**

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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 14TH JUNE 2023**

Those attending the meeting: Councillors Lowri Wynn Morgan (Chair), Jude Rogers (Vice-Chair), Witek Mintowt-Czyz, Janet Williams, Margaret Barker, Christopher Bateman and the Clerk to the Council, Robert Wade. County Councillor David Hughes Jones was also in attendance. On the floor of the meeting were Jane Moggridge, Susanna Jones, Peter Clarke and Russell James.

1. **To accept apologies for absence**

Councillor Jamie Edwards gave his apologies.

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. The Chair expressed particular concern over the second item in the report, dealing with a burglary; the offender had pleaded guilty and had received a Conditional Discharge, which seemed not to fit with such a serious offence. She would be contacting the police officer concerned to obtain further information. Other Councillors expressed concern at the actions of that person, who still lived in, and was regularly seen around, the village. The Chair confirmed that she would be prepared to translate the report into Welsh so that it could be published in its entirety, as advised by the police.

1. **To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the Meeting on the 10th May 2023**

The Chair requested that, at the end of paragraph 7(a) there should be added the words “It was agreed that financial information would be provided to Peter Clarke by the Clerk in order for him to budget correctly for the future expense.” Subject to that alteration, the Minutes were approved.

1. **To consider matters arising from the Minutes of the Meeting on the 12th April 2023**
2. Page 2 – 6(a) – the matter of the Cleaner had not been resolved. The Clerk said that he had written to Tracie Vaughan to see if she was prepared to be the Caretaker as well as Cleaner, and had received the response that she would like to see her proposed contract, which it was agreed was reasonable. The old contract had been produced, but was really not purpose for purpose, and it was agreed that a new contract should be drafted to get matters updated in terms of the work that was actually to be done, and the amount that should be paid. The Chair said she would try to arrange to meet Tracie personally to try to resolve matters. Councillor Barker remarked that a white board that had been in the undercroft, on which somebody had scrawled words indicating the presence of the toilet, had been removed. It was agreed that steps should be taken to recover it. Meanwhile, concern had been expressed by a number of people at the fact that there was no sign whatever indicating the whereabouts of the toilet. The Clerk confirmed that he would order one as quickly as possible, and also put in hand the purchase of a vacuum cleaner. Clerk said that he had received a bill from the village shop for the cleaning materials. Reference was made to the fact that the Hall would be closed altogether for between three and six months whilst the proposed work was carried out, and the Cleaner would need to be informed of this. After that work was completed, there would be a greater need for cleaning services than ever before, and perhaps additional cleaning services might be required accordingly.
3. Page 2 – 6(c) – Appreciation was expressed for the choice by Councillor Bateman of a notice-board, which he had sourced and erected, to serve the area of Llangattock Lingoed.
4. Page 7 – 15(d) - the issue of the decision by Cadw not to cut grass in the area around the Castle was the subject of considerable concern. The general feeling was that this was not only inhibiting access to the Castle and use of the area, but was likely to lead to ticks in dogs exercising in the grounds (reportedly costing £300 for treatment). It was not good for tourism, and could potentially cause problems with the Village Day planned for the 1st July, and, whilst Cadw claimed that the decision was to aid biodiversity, the general view was that it had more to do with saving money. It also appeared curious that the moat *was* being cut, which could harm the glow-worms who lived there. An individual Councillor had cut paths through the grass, which had produced a markedly adverse reaction from Cadw. The Chair said that she had sent an e-mail to which she had had no response. The Clerk was requested to e-mail Cadw in the same way as the Chair had done, in the hope that this more “official” approach might elicit the appropriate reaction, although this appeared unlikely. Russell James said that the same thing was happening in Skenfrith. The Clerk questioned whether a direct approach to the Kentchurch Estate might help, but at this stage it was felt that efforts should be made to try to resolve matters with Cadw, who lease the Castle grounds from the Estate.

1. **To consider the progress of the work relating to the Town Hall Project**

The Chair discussed the need of the Council to establish the management of the Council’s finances in the Town Hall project, bearing in mind that individual Councillors were ultimately responsible for safeguarding the money. She proposed a separate meeting of Councillors alongside the Project managers and leading officers of Grosmont Futures in order to try to resolve the issue of how money would be disbursed and managed. From the floor, Peter Clarke said that he had distributed the latest Highlight Report. On the point made by the Chair, he was concerned that, with what could be a very substantial amount of money, there might be accusations of money-laundering and fraud, and it was vital that stringent controls were instituted. He would send the Clerk bullet-points setting out the information that he required to try to draft a budget. It was agreed that Councillors could indicate their availability for a meeting attended by them, Peter Clarke, Alex Minford and also members of the number 4 Group, who had been charged with the issue of operation of the Hall. Councillor Mintowt-Czyz asked if the issue of the raising of the precept needed to be reconsidered, and the Clerk questioned the issue of consultation with the community on which he had had correspondence with One Voice and with the Welsh Government which he had shared with Councillors. It was confirmed that all these issues would be considered at the proposed meeting.

1. **To discuss Grosmont Online**

Councillor Rogers said that she had now established a weekly news-sheet which was published and posted by her online, by e-mail subscription and on notice-boards in Grosmont and Llangua and sent to Councillor Bateman in Llangattock Lingoed. Nick Jones was working on the proposed Link magazine now that his work commitments were not so heavy. Councillor Rogers said she had made improvements to the web-site in line with the survey feedback. She had had no reaction from the winner of the raffle. The Chair expressed the thanks of the Council for a job well done.

1. **To receive items of correspondence**

The Clerk said that he had received an e-mail from The Ramblers association concerning a proposed initiative which could help to identify and design new local walking routes and enhance and upgrade existing one, with support from Ramblers Cymru and Monmouthshire County Council. Three communities from Monmouthshire would be selected. The Clerk said that, in view of the previous correspondence with Andrew Stumpf, he had sought Andrew’s views, although it was possible that the initiative might not be required in the Grosmont area because of the considerable activity already being undertaken. However, the feeling of the meeting was that there was no harm in putting the Council forward. Councillor Bateman agreed to be the contact for the purpose.

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

The Council considered one application:

DM/2023/00672 – The Granary at Werngounsel Farm – an application for permission to convert a garage into self-contained accommodation.

 This application was agreed.

1. **To discuss an increase to the Clerk’s salary**

It was agreed that this should be dealt with at a meeting by itself, not least of all because the issue needed to be considered in a closed meeting. It was agreed that a suitable date would be found.

1. **To agree expenditure and other accounts matters**
2. The following payments were agreed:

 Tracie Vaughan £286.55

 The Village shop £45.40

 NFU Insurance £1,210.88

 Council Tax £519.89

 Chris Bateman (for the notice-board) £408

 One Voice membership £127

 Paper and travel £40.75

1. The Clerk said that the NFU had valued the Town Hall at £777,150, and Public Liability insurance was limited to £2,500 for any one claim, and that they were assuming three employees. It was agreed that the insurance should be renewed as it stood (it has been notified late to the Clerk as it was), but the Clerk should cause NFU to review its cover.
2. **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 verges were not being cut, either, which meant that ruts in the road were concealed, and junctions were obscured. County Councillor David Hughes-Jones Clerk said that he was seeing a Council representative on the 16th June to see if something could be done. From the floor, Jane Moggridge said that a 30 mph sign on the entrance to the village up Cupid’s Hill was totally obscured. Russell Jenkins said that, some time in the past, chain link fencing had been set up, and was now overgrown with hedging. It was felt to be unlikely that the County Council would agree to cut it back. The Clerk was asked to correspond with Carl Touhig to try to see what could be done.

13. **To discuss Footpaths**

Councillor Rogers said that she there was an event planned for the 15th June to publicize the initiative for Paths to Wellbeing. It would involve a walk followed by a free buffet.

14 **To receive and consider any other business**

1. Councillor Barker asked for helpers at the Village Day on the 1st July. She also asked and was given permission to store the skittles boards in the Hall.
2. The Clerk mentioned the passing of the Historic Environment (Wales) Act, which suggested that a lot more activity would be put into place for listed buildings. It was not in force yet, and its implications had yet to be seen. The Chair said she would look into it.

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

This was agreed as the **12th July 2023 at 7 30 p.m.**