**GROSMONT COMMUNITY COUNCIL**

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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 22ND FEBRUARY 2024**

Those attending the meeting: Councillors Lowri Wynn Morgan (Chair), Witek Mintowt-Czyz, Jan Williams, Jamie Edwards and Nicholas Jones. Also present was Peter Clarke.

1. **To accept apologies for absence**

Councillors Jude Rogers and Margie Barker sent their apologies.

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

It was agreed that these could be raised as and when the need occurred during any of the ensuing discussions.

3. **Discussion on matters arising from the Police Reports and police issues generally**

Action: Councillor Mintowt-Czyz asked if a police representative might be at the next meeting, and the Clerk said he would enquire.

4. **To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the Meetings on the 9th and 29th January 2024**

The minutes of the meeting on the 9th January were approved (the Chair proposing and Councillor Mintowt-Czyz seconding).   
  
The Minutes of the meeting on the 29th January were discussed and approved (Councillor Mintowt-Czyz proposing and the Chair seconding) provided that the name of the Chair was corrected to “Wynn” and Clause 3(a) was replaced with the following wording: “The Clerk presented budget figures to the Council. The historical figures were accepted. It was accepted that there had to be an element of guesswork in the figures for 2024/5. However the projected budget was inaccurate and subjected to criticism. The Clerk apologised to the Council for the deficiencies in the proposed budget.”

5. **To consider matters arising from the Minutes of the Meeting on the 12th December 2023** The Clerk confirmed that he had sent the Precept request to Monmouthshire County Council.

6. **To consider the progress of the work relating to the Town Hall Project and the Highlight ` Report, and specifically whether there should be a separate bank account for the Project.** (a) Peter Clarke, invited to address the meeting from the floor, said that the work had been handed over to the architect, Sarah Browne, who would in turn be instructing the builder. There would be a JCT (Joint Contracts Tribunal) Minor Works Contract which would specify times of starting and ending, the nature of the works and the cost etc. The architect was currently talking to the builder. The matter would continue to be referred back to the Council when necessary. Peter said he was confident that they had found the right builder for the job. The Chair asked for confirmation that it was not an employment contract, and Peter confirmed that.

(b) The Clerk referred to an earlier discussion between him and Peter, as to whether a new bank account should be opened for the purposes of the Project. It was definitely agreed (the Chair proposing and Councillor Janet Williams seconding) that a new account should be opened for the Hub once the renovated Town Hall had opened for business. As to whether a new account was needed for the building works themselves, an inconclusive discussion ensued as a result of which the Clerk was requested to look into the possibility of opening an Instant Saver account which would be an annex to the main Council current bank account.

(c) There had been activity on the media regarding the issue of announcing the good news of the Lottery Fund grant to the community. Councillor Jones proposed (seconded by the Chair) that there should be flyers printed which would be circulated to the community. He had already requested Honeycomb to provide a quote, which he said was likely to be less than £100 based on their recent cost of printing the newsletter. He said that they had until the end of the month in which to notify the Fund how they proposed to use the promised £500 grant for a celebration, which was planned for the 13th April. Representatives of the Senedd and MCC would be invited, and the Chair suggested that the judiciary might also be represented. Councillor Mintowt-Czyz proposed (seconded by Councillor Jones) that the Council should match the £500 Grant, and this was agreed following perusal of the Financial Statement furnished by the Clerk.

(d) Some discussion ensued, initiated by Councillor Jones but to which Peter Clarke contributed from the floor, as to how communication should take place between those persons involved in the Project. There was general favour that this should be done electronically, and that paperwork should be stored electronically. It was recognised that expert help might be needed to ascertain the best system, and that there would be a cost involved. As a start for this, the Chair said she had arranged for the Partnership Agreement to be signed electronically. Councillor Jones said that the Council would need to provide leadership for this. It was agreed that there should be a new Agenda item to be entitled “Community Online and Paperless Future” to be discussed at future meetings to ensure this was kept under review.

7.  **To discuss the Partnership Agreement**

As already discussed, the Chair said that everybody present had signed the Partnership Agreement electronically. She would be arranging for Councillors Rogers and Barker to sign.

8. **To discuss Grosmont Online**

Councillor Rogers was not present, but Councillor Edwards in her absence read out a brief e-mail from her: “1) Grosmont online - Witek and Peter Clarke and I had an initial meeting about websites and domains and discussed several options. I have sent emails to other councils/people I know who work with public sector bodies to get further advice on having someone design something for us – I think us trying to design something ourselves is just too big an ask.” It was agreed by the meeting that it was something that required expert help.

9. To **receive items of correspondence**

The Clerk said there was nothing other than what would be referred to under other headings in thee Minutes

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

Annwylfa – proposed alteration and extension – Details had been circulated by the Clerk. Councillor Mintowt-Czyz declared an interest in that the application was by his neighbour. The other members present stated that they had no objection to the proposal.

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

The Clerk referred again to the Financial Statement, which was noted. The Chair questioned whether an application for loan permission might be submitted. Councillor Mintowt-Czyz said that the decision two years previously, by the previous Council, to raise the Precept to pay for a loan, had been overtaken by events, but had helped to produce the current position in which the Council had a surplus to contribute towards the cost of the Project. It was pointed out that the work on the undercroft was not funded, and Peter Clarke also pointed out that ongoing maintenance – probably costing £10,000 per annum - was not covered, and could not be covered, by the Lottery Fund grant, which had to be spent on a capital project. Peter Clarke suggested that the decision on this issue should be delayed until the meeting with the architect on the 26th February. It was agreed that this issue should go onto the Agenda for the March meeting.

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

The Clerk had already distributed the results of an e-mail exchange between him and Steve Baldwin of Monmouthshire County Council as a result of which a note of reluctance was noted on his part to the meeting which it had been hoped could be set up with members of the Council. Councillor Edwards said that attempts were being made by MCC to remedy the potholes by pouring tarmac onto selected pot-holes, but this did not have any lasting effect. Councillor Mintowt-Czyz asked that an e-mail should be sent, expressing the Council’s extreme concern at the state of the road. The Clerk said that Mark Hand had now moved on, and Carl Touhig was responsible for the state of the roads.

**13. To discuss Footpaths**There were no issues noted under the item.

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

The Chair suggested that consideration should be given to appointing a Responsible Financial Officerto take over the finances from the Clerk, who currently combined both his clerical duties and those of the RFO. The Clerk said that he had proposed this himself especially in view of the additional responsibilities that would fall on the RFO in view of the Town Hall Project, the need for quick decisions on payment of money and the distance between his own home and the village of Grosmont. The Chair asked Councillors to consider whether they knew of any possible candidates.

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

In view of the fact that Defibrillator training was taking place in the Town Hall on the 12th March, it was recognised that the normal date pursuant to Standing Orders would have to be varied. Councillor Mintowt-Czyz expressed some concern over this, although the Chair said it was important to be flexible. It was accordingly agreed that the next meeting should take place on the **26th March 2024 at 7:30 pm**.