**GROSMONT FAWR COMMUNITY COUNCIL**

**CYNGOR CYMUNED GROSMONT FAWR**

**Chairman/Cadeirydd**

**Councillor David Hughes Jones**

**Clerk/Clerc**

**Mr. R. Wade**

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**MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING OF GROSMONT FAWR COMMUNITY COUNCIL HELD BY ZOOM**

**ON THE 24TH DAY OF JANUARY 2022**

**Those attending: Councillors David Hughes-Jones (Chair), Farr, Beavan, Sheridan, Stark, Mintowt-Czyz and McVann; also present were Mrs Jan Chatfield, Mrs Deborah Nevill and Mrs Jane Moggridge and the Clerk**

1. **Apologies for Absence**

No apologies for absence had been given.

1. **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations were given at the outset of the meeting. It was agreed that these would be given as and when they arose during the course of the meeting.

1. **Discussion regarding the meeting of the Grosmont Council/Grosmont Futures Steering Committee on the 17th January 2022 and financial issues stemming therefrom**

The Chairman said that the Council had to agree the Precept and consider the Partnership Agreement which was required for the funding of the building work on the Town Hall.

There was considerable discussion about the Precept, with the conflicting needs of ensuring that there was money for purchases and building up reserves whilst also being considerate of the added expense to the rate-payers.

The possibility of economies was mooted. The Clerk confirmed that a web-site was a legal requirement. With the concurrence of the meeting, he thanked Mrs Moggridge for very kindly allowing publication of the EGM on her web-site, but clearly the Council had to have its own web-site by law. He would look into costings – the lady he had approached was unfortunately leaving the area, and was therefore unable to help. It was agreed that this item should remain in the budget, but reduced to £1,000 from £1,300.

On a proposal by Councillor Stark (seconded by Councillor Farr), it was agreed by a majority to reduce overall grants to a total of £500 from £800.

Built into the budget was a figure of £3,000 per annum for repayment of a loan of £30,000 for essential work on the Town Hall. CouncillorMintowt-Czyzj questioned this figure, but the Clerk said it had definitely been voted for at the Council’s General Meeting on the 10th January, and the decision could not be revisited for six months. CouncillorMintowt-Czyzj asked for his view to be noted on the record that he felt the discussion on the matter had been inadequate, although the Chairman said that in his view there had been substantial discussion. There was agreement between Councillor Stark and CouncillorMintowt-Czyzj that the Council should not be looking to a loan for 50 years, to burden future generations, so a loan over 10 to 12 years appeared sensible. It was agreed that a loan of £30,000 should be taken out over 12 years, which would entail payments of £3,000 per annum.

Councillor McVann expressed his concern that many people, especially in places outside Grosmont itself, didn’t use the Town Hall, and the Council had to consider the reaction of the rate-payers generally, and Councillor Beavan expressed his concern at what would be a 24% rise in the precept. However, CouncillorMintowt-Czyzj said that people throughout Monmouthshire paid for the Monmouth Town Hall, for example, without probably setting foot in the building. It was important that such buildings should be preserved.

The Precept was agreed at £24,193 to take account of all factors discussed.

1. **The Partnership Agreement**

The Clerk referred to the Minutes of the meeting of the Steering Committee, and said it appeared that a Partnership Agreement between the Council and Grosmont Futures was required by the funding-providers. There was no need to be over-concerned about the content, because the funding officers, especially of the Lottery, would be “on our side” and would assist with wording. Documents he had circulated to the Councillors had demonstrated the sort of things that would be required, including a declaration of the purposes of the funding. It was intended that there should be a meeting this week between representatives of the Council and Grosmont Futures to sort out any points in the agreement. However, any points of concern to Councillors would of course be borne in mind and conveyed to that meeting. The Chairman said that, although he would prefer to attend that meeting, if it had to take place prior the next meeting of the Steering Committee on the 31st January he was content for the Clerk and Councillor Sheridan to proceed without him, because his time was very limited.

Councillor Farr said that the Partnership Agreement itself appeared to be standard. His concern was to ensure that the Council’s position as trustees of the Town Hall was safeguarded, and he envisaged a separate agreement, perhaps a lease over 10 years. The Clerk said that what was being looked at now was an agreement that would enable the funding to be procured. An agreement to ensure that the Council’s interest was preserved could be considered later. Councillor Sheridan said that the documents provided by the Clerk were an excellent frame-work.

The Clerk asked about his position. He had attended the meeting of the Steering Committee and had been asked to take the Minutes. CouncillorMintowt-Czyzj said that his understanding had been that Grosmont Futures would be providing somebody to take the Minutes, so that the Clerk would not be required at every meeting. Councillor Stark also expressed his concern at the possible extra expense to the Council involved in the Clerk’s attendance at such meetings, especially if they were going to take place frequently, and pointed out that this had not been budgeted for in the Precept. The Clerk said that he was of course in the hands of the Council, but that it did seem sensible for him to form a link between the Council and the Steering Committee, and he pointed out that the funders of the Town Hall work were clearly requiring the involvement of the Clerk, so that his presence at such meetings would appear to be inescapable. There was no need to assume that meetings would take place at such a frequency as to cause financial problems to the Council, and he also pointed out that the scheme put forward by Peter Willis involved an initial Capital Grant Phase which might well take the project into the early part of 2023, by which time a new Precept would fall to be considered, so that any additional expense could be reconsidered. It was generally agreed that the Clerk should continue to act as clerk for the Steering Committee unless and until the matter was reconsidered.

1. **Discussion regarding the issue of dog waste bins**

Councillor Stark queried why these would help, because if people were unwilling to clear up after their dogs now, he doubted whether they would use them in future. Councillor Mintowt-Czyzj said that to use the bins successfully the Council needed somebody prepared to empty them. One of the churchgoers in the Grosmont Church had at one time emptied a bin in the churchyard which was always full, but had stopped doing so because she felt it was an imposition. The Chairman referred to the County Council scheme which had been recently devised. It was pointed out that Merlin, who were clearly being considered as the main contractors, had refused to come to Grosmont, although the Clerk mentioned the contractor who was now emptying the bins at Llantilio Pertholey and who had indicated that he would be prepared to come to Grosmont. Councillor Stark said that one in the village was not going to be much use. They had been budgeted for by the former Clerk, although Councillor Farr reminded the meeting that the purchase was only the beginning, and that emptying would have to be taken into account. He proposed (Councillor Stark seconding) that, as part of overall economies, this should be delayed until after the election. Councillor Mintowt-Czyzj proposed an amendment (seconded by Councillor Sheridan) that the item should be retained in the budget and acted on. On a vote, the amendment was defeated and the proposal agreed.

1. **Any Other Business**

Councillor Stark requested clarification of the position of the Building Committee. They were not allowed to spend money, and were essentially an advisory group only. Any formal decisions would be made by the Council, albeit on the recommendation of the Building Committee. If two of them were to confer over (for instance) the question of whether to vary a specification of lead, would that represent a meeting for which Minutes would be required? The Clerk questioned how such decisions would be made; it was not exactly clear, but the reality was that somebody – possibly a specialist – would be in charge of such things once building work had begun, so that any intervention by the Committee would not be conclusive anyway. CouncillorMintowt-Czyzj said that any formal decisions clearly had to be those of the Council as a whole. Councillor Sheridan asked if One Voice and/or the Welsh Government had expressed any views on this issue. The Clerk said that he would enquire. There was clearly plenty of time because the time-scale envisaged by Peter Willis would not start for possibly as much as a year.

1. **The Date of the next meeting**

This being an Extraordinary General Meeting, no date was fixed for the next meeting. The Council will next meet in General Meeting on **Monday 4th March**.