##  **Ordinary General Meeting held on the 9th January 2023 with hybrid facilities. The physical meeting was held at the Gallery, 2nd Floor, Pontardawe Arts Centre, Herbert Street, Pontardawe, with support via virtual platform Zoom, in line with Welsh Government requirements, commencing at 6.45 pm**

## **Present at Pontardawe Arts Centre:**

Councillor Mrs L Purcell (presiding), D Brain, M Davies, H Davies, J Watkins, M Vincent, B Howells, P Temblett and Mrs G Ffrancon– also present Noel Davies, Olly Brandrick and Dylan Fitzgerald (formally Calved) (Youth Representative candidates)

## **Present via Zoom**

Councillor A Richards, Mrs R Phillips and J Nemeth

**Apologies:**

Councillor S Todd, Ms E Thomas, G Davies and Mrs J Lord

## **12123: Disclosure of Personal and Pecuniary Interests:**

Councillors A Richards and Mrs R Phillips, was placed in the Zoom waiting room and took no part in the discussion on the Pontardawe English Medium School proposals.

## **Resolved** to be noted**.**

## **12124: Signing of the Minutes of the Ordinary General Meeting held on the 12th December 2022:**

## **Resolved** that the minutes of the Ordinary General Meeting held on the 12th December 2022 having been read and confirmed as a true record be accepted by Council.

## **12125: Matters raised by Members of the Public:**

None

## **Resolved** to be noted**.**

## **12126: Co-Option of Youth Representative:**

There were two vacancies for Youth Representatives for the period to the 31st August 2023. On the 31st August 2023 both positions would become automatically vacant, to allow a Co-Option vote from the 1st September 2023 for the following one-year period.

There were three candidates who were provided with the opportunity to submit a written statement which was made available to Members prior to the meeting.

The candidates were Noel Davies, Dylan Fitzgerald (formally Calved) and Olly Brandrick

Each Councillor was able to vote for one candidate by a show of hands. The two candidates with the highest number of votes would be Co-opted to the Council.

Council also decided that if there was an equal number of votes cast then the vote would be run again with those two candidates only.

The Co-Opted Candidates would be advised on the day following the meeting by email.

All three candidates addressed Council and the Mayor thanked the candidates for their enthusiasm and interest, she also acknowledged that the decision would be an extremely difficult one.

Vote 1 – Olly 6, Noel 3, Dylan 3 – Olly Brandrick Co-Opted

Vote 2 Noel 3, Dylan 9 – Dylan Fitzgerald (formally Calved) Co-Opted

## **Resolved** that Dylan Fitzgerald (formally Calved) and Olly Brandrick will be Co-opted as Youth Councillors at Pontardawe Town Council until the 31st August 2023

## **12127: Defibrillator Mapping Project:**

The unit at 4 Herbert Street was still not operational however the Clerk was making enquiries about a loaded unit which could be placed at the location until the refurbishment of the unit was completed.

All boxes that that had the ability to be locked were now locked

No dates were yet available for Training and publicity photographs. Council would be updated as soon as they were available

## **Resolved**  to be noted.

## **12128: Police Matters:**

Pontardawe Statistics 40 crimes in November, slightly up from 33 crimes in October (22 Violence, 5 Other theft and 6 Anti-social behaviour) Trebanos Statistics -2 total crimes in November which the 2 in October (1 vehicle crime and 1 Other theft).

The two PACT meetings held in Pontardawe in 2022 were organised as a trial. The Police Service had stated that future PACT meetings would need to be a partnership and would not be Police lead.

A Cuppa with a Copper was due to be held in Trebanos in February 2023

**Resolved** that Councillor A Richards will obtain further information on the future of Pontardawe PACT meetings.

## **12129: Monthly update from the Neath Port Talbot Council Members:**

Councillor A Richards provided the following information:

* Members of the council’s Social Services, Housing and Community Safety Cabinet Board agreed to implement the Welsh Government’s Leasing Scheme Wales (LSW). The Council would lease properties from private sector landlords and sub-let the properties to those it has a duty to protect from homelessness. A renovation incentive could also be offered to landlords where properties don’t meet minimum property standards or to improve the property’s Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating. Empty properties would also be be brought into the scheme
* The proposed Celtic Freeport was a new project promising 16,000 new jobs and £5.5bn of new inward investment all based on green energy. The successful bidder in the race to host Wales’s first freeport would be named in early 2023.
* Neath Port Talbot Public Services Board had published a draft Local Well-being Plan and was asking for feedback to help ensure that the final plan would help to improve well-being across the county borough.

Councillor Mrs R Phillips provided the following information:

* The children had excelled at all schools during their Christmas Events
* There had been some local flooding due to extreme weather
* Councillors were dismayed by the Census figures which showed a continuing decline in Welsh Speakers
* Neath Port Talbot Council were to monitor the speed and volume of traffic through Trebanos once the average speed cameras were installed on the A4067

 **Resolved** that an Eco & Wellbeing Committee will be arranged to discuss the draft Local Well-being Plan (Councillor Richards will provide reference material)

## **12130: Monthly Update on English Medium Primary School Changes:**

Councillor Anthony Richards and Rebeca Phillips were not present for any of the discussion on the English Medium Primary School proposals

The revised consultation on proposals to establish a new English-medium 3-11 school to replace three current primary schools had a closing date of 24th January 2023

Council Members were advised that Officers from Neath Port Talbot Council were to arrange face to face meetings with staff, governing bodies, parents and pupils of the involved schools to answer queries. Public Meetings were also to take place in Alltwen and Pontardawe.

A full and frank discussion on the proposals was carried out and Councillors had several concerns:

* Concerns were raised that the numbers included in the proposal's planning were inflated which could lead to challenges for the school at a later date.
* The three specified schools were currently performing well and there was no definitive evidence that larger schools outperformed smaller more local schools for Pupil wellbeing
* No specific details provided in the consultation documents on the improvement to technology or facilities
* There seems to be discordant information on the level of support for the new school in the local area following the initial consultation
* The £3652 per pupil for the new school was less than per pupil spend for the separate schools and therefore If the figure of 770 children to attend the new school was incorrect then the economies of scale indicated would not be forthcoming
* A percentage of green spaces (and possibly playing fields) would be lost through the proposal. Demand is currently not being met with local clubs having to travel to Neath and Swansea areas to secure grounds for training - further reduction to the facilities would exacerbate the situation. This figure also did not include the additional fields attached to Alltwen School. The proposal to transfer the Fields in Trust to address the issue would not address the shortfall due to current overcapacity in the recreation fields
* The consultation does not consider the future expansion of playing field provision in Pontardawe, based on current projections and especially with the increase of girls wishing to be involved in football and the creation of girl’s teams
* Traffic Management details were insufficient with no solutions offered for accommodating the additional traffic that would be created at Parc Ynysderw and the Bypass road ,by both the new school and swimming pool location
* There were no details of additional costs that may be required to address highway issues that would fall outside of the grant provision and would be raised from local Council tax
* Increased pollution due to a significant increase in vehicles at the site. Plans go against Welsh Government's own agenda for Clean Air. Welsh ministers are committed to passing legislation to improve air quality before the end of the Senedd term in May 2026.
* Insufficient safe walking routes ,especially for very young children. Plans go against Welsh Government's own agenda for active travel to schools: <https://publichealthnetwork.cymru/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Active-Travel-to-School-Toolkit-Eng.pdf> Having schools in the three separate communities, as is currently the case for Alltwen and Llangiwg (Godre'r Graig would follow if a new build would be agreed for and in the village), would allow a greater number of families to walk their children to school.
* Significant impact on the communities of Ynysmeudwy, Alltwen and Godrergraig, with the loss of a hub for learning,  involvement of the children in community activities and safe walking routes for younger children. The consultation documents itself states on page 4: "Currently the three schools are separate establishments, on sites some distance apart." They are separate communities which are served by schools unique to that community - creating one school from disparate areas will not lead to a coherent community being formed. The proposed school will be in essence in a vacuum with pupils parachuted in and families disengaged. With the new Curriculum for Wales placing value on "Cynefin" - a Welsh term defined by Curriculum for Wales as ‘the place where we feel we belong, where the people and landscape around us are familiar, and the sights and sounds are reassuringly recognisable.’ - this proposed school would not reflect the pupils Cynefin and would not enable them to make meaningful connections with their immediate surroundings.
* All the communities surrounding the smaller schools are thriving and are sustainable with communities within easy walking distance of the school which negated the need for vehicular transport easing pollution concerns. This proposal therefore is NOT in accord with NPTs aim as stated in their draft health and Wellbeing plan" to ensure that all communities are thriving and sustainable
* Concerns were raised around the impact of the proposed large new English-medium school on Welsh-language education in the Swansea Valley with YGG Trebannws and YGG Pontardawe made particularly vulnerable through the proposed development. With 2021 Census figures on Welsh-speaker figures for the valley proving worrying - councillors felt this step would further intensify the negative impact on the Welsh language in the area. Indeed, it was noted that the Consultation’s own impact report on the Welsh language reflected more negative factors than positives for the proposal.
* The removal of local area schools and introduction of a large central school would unfairly impact those most disadvantaged families without regular transport. This could lead to the exclusion of those children most at need from Nursery education if families were not able accommodate transport for half days
* Loss of Ancestral Heritage in communities following local school closures where parents and grandparents have attended over many years
* Although the location of the new swimming pool would benefit younger people it would impact on more senior members of the community by removing the facility from a residential area. This would be a disadvantage in an aging population.
* Although the £22 million had been allocated to that particular project, there was no reason why a new proposal and business plan could not be submitted for funding for a different project.

Council voted on the proposal to establish an English-Medium 3-11 school to replace Alltwen, Godrergraig and Llangiwg School

The vote was 9 against with one abstention

Pontardawe Town Council therefore objects to the Proposal.

## **Resolved:** that the Clerk will respond to the consultation with the above points and will state that Pontardawe Town Council rejects the proposal to establish a new English-Medium 3-11 school at Parc Ynysderw to replace Alltwen, Godrergraig and Llangiwg Schools

## **12131: Clerks Report re Crossing Patrol Officer for Swansea Road:**

Neath Port Talbot Council had confirmed that the new Crossing Patrol Officer for Swansea Road, Pontardawe would be in situ at the start of the School term in January 2023

## **Resolved** to be noted.

## **12132: Grant Applications:**

There were no applications or letters of thanks this month.

## **Resolved** to be noted.

## **12133: Clerks update on Eco and Wellbeing Committee including Cwmdu:**

Short Term projects identified and action required

Improvement to George V Park – Council was advised that the Clerk would be completing the Expression of Interest form in order apply for grant funding from the ‘Transforming Towns place making Fund’ shortly.

Following Christmas 2022 and given the work that would hopefully be carried out on the Pontardawe Arts Centre this year, the Clerk wished to look into the possibility of a planted Christmas tree for Pontardawe and associated grant funding.

## **Resolved** that the Clerk be given permission pursue the possibility of a permanent tree together with associated grant funding.

## **12134: Planning:**

Sirius planning had provided Council with details of a proposal for the development of a solar farm at Craig y Perchych in Glais SA7 9HP as part of its pre-application notices. The development was not however within the Pontardawe Town Council boundaries.

Additional information had been provided to Council on the Town Team’s progress with the Pontardawe Community Plan. They were also advised that ‘the Urbanists’ had been contracted by Neath Port Talbot Council to complete Communities plans for areas, and who would be liaising with the Town Team shortly.

**Resolved** that Sirius be advised that the area was incorrectly named and should be ’Craig y Perchyll’

## **12135: April Ordinary General Meeting:**

The April Ordinary General Meeting would fall on a Bank Holiday. It would therefore be necessary to change the date from the 10th April to the 17th April 2023

## **Resolved** that the April Ordinary General Meeting will be held on the 17th April 2023

## **12136: Flower displays for 2023:**

A Policy & Resources Committee would be required to discuss the Hanging basket scheme for the summer of 2023

## **Resolved** that a Policy & Resources Committee will be arranged

## **12137: Celtic Leisure Transfer:**

Council fully supported the transfer of leisure assets within Celtic Leisure back to the control of Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council.

Councillor Richards had already stated that Council could be provided with additional information once the County Borough embargo on publication had been lifted

## **Resolved** that the Town Council will fully support the transfer of leisure assets within Celtic leisure to Neath Port Talbot Council.

## **12138 Account Schedule 399 and Bank Reconciliation:**

All documents were made available to Councillor prior to the meeting.

## **Resolved** that Account Schedule 399 totalling £26443.66 together with bank reconciliation will be accepted by Council in line with Standing Orders.

## **12139: Consultation the Welsh Government Electoral Administration and Reform White Paper:**

Council was provided with the consultation prior to the meeting.

**Resolved** to be noted.

## **12140: Email requesting permission to run a series of RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch sessions at Cwmdu:**

An email requesting permission to hold a Big Garden Birdwatch at Cwmdu.

**Resolved** that permission will be granted.

## **12141: Urgent Road Safety Matters and responses:**

None

## **Resolved** to be noted

## **12142: Next Meeting:**

The next Ordinary Meeting will take place on the 13th February 2023 with hybrid facilities. The physical meeting to take place at the Gallery, 2nd Floor, Pontardawe Arts Centre, Herbert Street, Pontardawe with support from the virtual platform Zoom.

Signed ………………………………………………………………………

 Dated ……………………………………………………………………..