##  **Ordinary General Meeting held on the 11th December 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**

## The Mayor requested Council to observe a minute’s silence in memory of two late Councillors and past Mayors of Pontardawe Town Council, Brian Thomas and Winston Price

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

Councillor P Temblett (presiding), D Brain, S Todd, Mrs L Purcell, M Vincent and N Davies (Youth Councillor)

## **Present online by Zoom:**

Councillor H Davies, Mrs G Ffrancon, J Nemeth and M Davies (arrived at 7.55 pm)

## **Apologies:**

Councillor G Davies, Mrs E Thomas, Mrs R Phillips, Mrs J Lord, A Richards and B Howells

## **12398: Disclosure of Personal and Pecuniary Interests:**

Councillor S Todd for the Pontardawe Conservation volunteers grant application.

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

## **12399: Signing of the Minutes of the Ordinary General Meeting held on the 13th November 2023**

## **Resolved** that the minutes of the Ordinary General Meeting held on the 13th November 2023, having been read and confirmed as a true record be accepted by Council with the following amendment:

12376 should state ‘Godrergraig school - Although the school is temporarily located in the Town Council area’

## **12400: Matters raised by Members of the Public:**

None

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

## **12401: Police Matters:**

Pontardawe Statistics: 40 crimes in October, down from 41 crimes in September (18 Violence, 7 Anti-social behaviour, 3 other theft, 8 Public Order)

Trebanos Statistics: 5 crimes in October down from 10 crimes in September (2 Anti-social behaviour, 3 Violence)

## **Resolved**  to be noted.

## **12402: Monthly update from the Neath Port Talbot Council Members:**

Councillor Mrs R Phillips and A Richards were not in attendance. Councillor H Davies had no additional information.

**Resolved** to be noted.

## **12403: Grant Applications:**

Councillor S Todd left the meeting during the discussion on the Pontardawe Conservation volunteers grant application as he was the applicant.

* Pontardawe Conservation volunteers – Grant request for equipment for an additional litter picking station for Rhyd y Fro. The Clerk confirmed that a completion statement had been received for the previous grant as it exceeded £500 – **Grant Awarded £180**
* Empower Inspire CIC – £400 to support Christmas projects for groups within Rhyd y Fro School. Council confirmed that a Community Interest Company was a not for profit organisation -**Grant awarded £400**
* Pontardawe Chamber of Trade and Commerce – Grant request for a project to involve local schools in the creation of bespoke Welsh Flags for the Pontardawe Town Centre. The grant request was £1421.85. Council was pleased to support a project to get the young people involved with the creation of flags, however further quotes/statements were required from the applicant. It was also identified that a local business would donate £500 for flags however not necessarily for a bespoke project – It was therefore agreed to request additional statements/invoices from the applicant and to determine if the cost could be reduced by a partnership between the Chamber of Commerce and the business willing to donate funds for generic flags.
* Pontardawe Community Wellbeing Hwb – A grant request was received to support a valuable community space, that was currently unheated, and therefore not utilised to its full extent during the colder months. A request was made for funding to support the installation of a donated wood burner and an insulated door. There was significant support from other organisations who had supported the venture with donated items – **Grant awarded £3000**

Grants are provided to benefit some or all of the residents of the Pontardawe Town Council area

## **Resolved** that the grant of £180 to the Pontardawe Conservation volunteers, £400 to Empower Inspire CIC and £3000 to the Pontardawe Wellbeing Hwb will be awarded

## **12404: Clerks update on Eco and Wellbeing Committee including Cwmdu:**

Short Term projects identified and action required:

* MUGA at George V Park – Awaiting result of grant application. Residents are being kept up to date with progress
* Christmas Tree Project – The project had now completed and a completion statement would be forwarded to Mynydd y Betws Community Wind farm. The project cost was £3775 ex vat and the grant provided was £3925 so there was an underspend of £150
* Street Art Graffiti trail – The current extreme weather had delayed the project however all the boxes and benches had received the base coat. The project would resume once the weather improved. The Grant providers had been made aware of the timing issues due to the poor weather conditions
* Heritage trail project was still ongoing with completion due in approximately April 2024
* CCTV Project – The application had been submitted by Neath Port Talbot Council on the Town Council’s behalf and further letters of support had been obtained. The Grant Panel decision was awaited.
* The special meeting to discuss Eco grant availability and possible projects would be discussed later in the meeting.

## **Resolved** to be noted.

## **12405: Winterfest:**

The Christmas window competition had been judged by the Glantawe Lions (1st Frostys, 2nd The Chirpy Bird, 3rd Viv Date Carpets). All winners had been advised by the Clerk.

The Winterfest had been well received and had been greatly enjoyed by the community. A meeting would be held, as in other years early in 2024,to pick up any minor issues for future reference.

The children’s walking Parade winners were in the process of being decided by a Town Poll with the results pending.

Neath Port Talbot Council regulations for obtaining road closures were extremely restrictive and therefore it was prudent for an application to be submitted as soon as possible in the new year for the 2024 Winterfest. Performance 78 had been employed in 2023 as they were significantly less expensive than the competition. We had also been approached by PANTRY who wished to carry out a collection during the Winterfest Event in 2024.

**Resolved** that Performance 78 will be requested to complete the Road Closure forms for the 2024 Winterfest early in 2024 and PANTRY will be given permission to hold a collection during the Event.

## **12406: Additional Litter bin:**

Councillor Howells was not in the meeting. The Clerk had requested a dog waste bin at the location however no response had yet been received

**Resolved** that Council will be kept up to date with developments

## **12407: Neath Port Talbot Youth Services:**

Significant information had been received from the Youth Services regarding assistance for Ynysmeudwy Youth Club:

* NPT Youth Services would not be in a position to fund posts directly to assist the Youth Club. The Youth workers would need to be employed by Pontardawe Town Council
* Third party funding would be secured prior to employment of the youth workers
* The Employment would be for a fixed term for a fixed number of hours (probably 2 Youth workers for two hours, once a week over one year)
* At the end of the period the Town Council could identify further funding pots to extend the scheme
* No funding would be required directly from the Town Council.
* Although the Youth Workers were not employed by NPT Youth Services, they could access all the NPT Youth service training
* NPT Youth Services would assist the Town Council with process and procedure
* They would also assist with the grant applications
* The funding deadline was early January 2024, however there would be other opportunities

Councillor Ffrancon also confirmed that Youth Services would arrange the DBS Checks and that she was happy to assist with the recruitment as she had experience in this area.

The Clerk explained that the financial portion of the project was extremely positive. She had therefore contacted One Voice Wales to determine what the legal position was regarding the employment of Youth Workers as the Town Council was not able to utilise the General Power of Competence

**Resolved** that the Clerk will liaise with NPT Youth Services to obtain grant funding for Youth Workers at Ynysmeudwy Youth Club providing there was no legal bar to the project.

**12408: Planning:**

## **P2023/00864**

Applicant’s name and Address: Mr Mark Winston, 18 Bryn Derwen, Pontardawe SA8 4LF

Site Location: 18 Bryn Derwen, Pontardawe SA8 4LF

Proposed Development: Work on two trees under Tree preservation order T341

T1 – Oak – Remove dead wood and crown lifting of the lower branches to 12 feet

T2 – Monterey Cyprus – Remove dead wood

## **Resolved** No objection

**Licensing**

None

Neath Port Talbot Replacement Local Development Plan 2023-2038 – Call for candidate sites would be open until the 18th December 2023

## **Resolved** to be noted.

## **12409: Special Committee meeting 27.11.23 -This Committee to discuss the future of the Pontardawe Swimming Pool:**

The Committee was provided with Councillor Richards update on the Pontardawe Swimming Pool which stated that he was committed to ensuring that the community has access to safe, well maintained leisure facilities. The current pool is however in poor condition and has a very limited lifespan, of possibly less than 2 years.

The Swimming Pool was managed by Celtic Leisure on behalf of Neath Port Talbot Council and therefore the Council would be responsible for funding any replacement.

Councillor Richards was to engage with the Head of Leisure Services at Neath Port Talbot Council to obtain updates on the measures being taken to extend the pools lifespan, and to ensure its continued operation. These measures would encompass discussions about maintenance, renovation, funding sources and the development of a long-term strategy however this has and will take several months.

The Committee was adamant that the Swimming Pool was a crucial facility in the Community, not just to ensure that our children were conversant with water safety, and learned to swim, but also for encouraging healthy exercise for all ages.

It was agreed that this community facility was of the highest priority and needed to be supported by the Town Council, our County Borough Members, and Member of the Community who were already galvanised on Social media.

The Town Council was aware that the funding required to replace the facility was in the region of £8 - £10 million, however, there were annually, substantial funding pots available that could be diverted towards projects of this nature, in the Swansea Valley. It was noted that significant grant funding had already been allocated in both the Neath and Port Talbot areas.

Council were aware that grant funding had already been obtained by Neath Port Talbot Council for projects in Neath and Port Talbot from ‘Levelling up’ funding, and were keen to determine if similar funding in future could be utilised in the Swansea Valley, for large projects such as for a replacement Swimming Pool.

Overall it was agreed that the replacement of the swimming pool in Pontardawe was a high priority which would require the support of Town Council, County Borough Members and the community.

The Committee recommended that the Town Council write a strongly worded letter expressing the importance of the Swimming Pool to the community, and also place a social media post to this effect on the Town Council social media feed.

The Swimming Pool should also form an agenda point for each Ordinary Meeting going forward.

The Committee also recommended the Clerk write to Neath Port Talbot Council to request if future funds would be available from the Levelling up funding pot and that also, the County Borough Members will actively and urgently discuss this issue with Neath Port Talbot colleagues/departments at every opportunity.

## **Resolved** to be ratified.

## **12410: Special Committee meeting 27.11.23 -This Committee to discuss possible projects for a three- and five-year plan and possible projects for the for current Neath Port Talbot Local Nature partnership grants :**

There were several suggestions for longer term projects that could be either instigated or supported by the Town Council. These were as follows:

* Gwachel Roundabout – There may be issues surrounding health and safety due to the location of the roundabout, however, it was agreed that wildflowers such as those planted on the roundabouts in the City and County of Swansea should be suitable for this location. Discussions could take place between the Town Council, biodiversity team and Highways at Neath Port Talbot Council.
* The Recreation Ground required replacement changing rooms and could also be expanded to include a café/ restaurant area. The grounds themselves could be improved and expanded and could also include biodiverse areas. It was agreed that these ideas would need to be taken forward by the Recreation ground committee in conjunction with Neath Port Talbot Council
* George V Park – The Muga project was in progress and led by Neath Port Talbot Council , raised planters were also being planned under another funding pot. The Pavilion also required refurbishment. This would require a larger grant and the 30% third party funding was currently restricting action, as the organisation did not have funds of this nature. The Clerk suggested utilising another grant as third-party funding (Mynydd y Betws might be an option depending on any grant restrictions)
* Extensions to Riverside could also be considered however this would need to be led by the Riverside committee
* There was still land unallocated adjacent to the Riverside Centre, owned by Neath Port Talbot Council that was currently unused. The Clerk explained that several projects had been suggested for this land but had been deemed unsuitable as the land was a flood plain. Projects would therefore need to be in accordance with these restrictions. It was suggested that a Pump track or other cycling facility could be considered in this area together with walking areas and areas dedicated to nature. The Clerk confirmed that Neath Port Talbot Council would consider leasing land in this area for projects provided the Town Council could show a viable plan with funding

## The Committee recommended that projects of all duration should be identified which could utilise forthcoming funding pots and that the Clerk will write to Neath Port Talbot Council re the Gwachel Roundabout issues.

Re the Local Nature Partnership grants - The Committee were advised that the funding deadlines had passed for this grant, however, as funds were still available applications were still being accepted.

It was agreed that there were several areas in the Pontardawe area which could benefit from a Management plan to improve the Ecological benefit of the area, and which could also form part of a project that would be suitable for eco grants:

* Glanrhyd (adjacent to Riverside)
* Cwmdu
* George V Park
* Gellionnen common

It was suggested therefore that a wildlife survey could be carried out to determine project aims for each area.

The Committee suggested Rachel Carter from One Voice Wales be invited as soon as possible to survey the areas and provide suggestions for improvement.

## **Resolved** to be ratified.

## **12411: Hanging Baskets and other arrangements for Summer 2024 :**

It was agreed to discuss in Committee in January 2024 as the deadline was April 2024

**Resolved** to be noted.

## **12412: NALC Agreement on Local Government Pay :**

For spinal points to 43 the agreed award was a flat rate payment of £1925 (pro rata for part time staff). The Award was backdated to 1st April 2023 and therefore would include those staff members who had left the Council from the 1st April

**Resolved** that the above pay award and back dating will be agreed

## **12413: Trade Waste Changes :**

The Community Halls were owned by Pontardawe Town Council but run by Management Committees.

Trade waste contracts were held with Neath Port Talbot Council and we had been advised that stringent new rules were being introduced by the Welsh Government from April 2024 that would lead to an increase in cost of approximately £900 per annum.

Also, any general waste that included recyclables from that date would not be collected.

Following a discussion with the caretakers it was suggested that recycling bins would replace all general waste bins in the halls. Regular groups would be expected to separate waste and recycle correctly.

As one-off parties could not be guaranteed to recycle correctly, they would need to take all refuse home. A bond could be required to ensure compliance

**Resolved** to be noted.

**12414: One Voice Wales area committee 4th December 2023 :**

Noel Davies Youth Councillor was not able to attend the meeting, but did confirm that the Independent Remuneration Panel would consider Youth remuneration next year.

**Resolved** to be noted

## **12415: Account Schedule 409 and Bank Reconciliation:**

## **Resolved** that Account Schedule 409 totalling £31251.88 together with bank reconciliation, will be accepted by Council in line with Standing Orders.

## **12416: Letter from Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue:**

The letter was provided to Councillors prior to the meeting

**Resolved** to be noted

## **12417: Open Consultations:**

Councillors were provided with links to the consultation prior to the meeting

* Road Safety Strategy deadline 31.1.24
* Council tax consultation deadline 6.2.24

Councillors were asked to review and respond to the consultations individually

**Resolved** to be noted.

## **12418: Urgent Road Safety Matters and responses:**

The Clerk had received a response from Neath Port Talbot Council re the two serious vehicle collisions on the A474 between Rhyd y Fro and Cwmgors recently, due to standing water, and the speed limit on the road.

She had been advised that the collision data was only available prior to the 31.12.22 and which did not show sufficient issues to warrant changes. The drainage section had been advised of our concerns regarding standing water.

## **Resolved** to be noted

## **12419: Next Meeting:**

The next Ordinary Meeting will take place on the 8th January 2024 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 ……………………………………………………………………..