## **Ordinary General Meeting held on the 15th April 2024. The meeting was held at the Gallery, 2nd Floor, Pontardawe Arts Centre, Herbert Street, Pontardawe with Hybrid facilities by virtual platform Zoom, commencing at 6.45 pm**

## **Present:**

Councillor P Temblett (presiding), B Howells, G Davies, M Vincent, M Davies (from 7.26 pm) and D Brain

## **Present online by Zoom:**

Councillor J Nemeth, Mrs J Lord, J Watkins, Mrs L Purcell, S Todd and Mrs G Ffrancon

## **Apologies:**

Councillor A Richards, Mrs R Phillips, Mrs E Thomas, H Davies and N Davies (Youth Councillor)

## **12496: Disclosure of Personal and Pecuniary Interests:**

Councillor S Todd declared an interest in the Pontardawe Conservation volunteers grant applications as he was the applicant. Councillor Mrs J Lord declared and interest in the grant application from the Friends of George V Park.

Both Councillors removed themselves from the meeting during the discussion and decision on these grant applications

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

## **12497: Signing of the Minutes of the Ordinary General Meeting held on the 11th March 2024**

## **Resolved** that the minutes of the Ordinary General Meeting held on the 11th March 2024, having been read and confirmed as a true record be accepted by Council.

## **12498: Matters raised by Members of the Public:**

None

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

## **12499: Police Matters:**

Pontardawe Statistics: 38 crimes February up from 31 in January (13 Violence, 6 Anti-social behaviour, 4 shoplifting and 4 Criminal Damage)

Trebanos Statistics: 5 February equal to 5 in January (2 Violence, 2 Anti-social behaviour and 1 shoplifting)

Council remarked that shoplifting had not been an issue for several years.

## **Resolved** to be noted.

## **12500: Monthly update from the Neath Port Talbot Council Members:**

None of the County Borough Members were able to attend the meeting however they had provided some information on ongoing issues which was read by the Clerk.

Welsh Government had considered the request to remove the Swansea Valley school scheme from the funding envelope and to add a new build Godrergraig Primary school scheme in its place and have requested additional information. A Welsh language assessment was also to be completed. A response was expected by the Autumn

The James street derelict Chapel had been reviewed by Building Control but they felt that there were currently no actionable issues under sections 77 & 78 of the building Act 1984. They were in contact with the Police and Fire Service and would monitor the situation monthly

Chris Saunders was currently unable to provide any information regarding the future of the Pontardawe Swimming Pool, as this was a sensitive issue, with ongoing inspections by engineers. Council would be informed as soon as any information was available.

The issues with Road Closure orders which was increasingly preventing community festivals due to additional costs, was due to tighter regulations on ‘Duty of Care’ which were likely to become more restrictive, once actions were adopted due to the Terrorism Act. This had led to the County Borough compelling the recruitment of Performance Management companies to mitigate potential legal risk.

There had been concerns that Gelligron House was to be used to house displaced persons. However, the Head of Housing had confirmed that there were no specific plans at present, for the use of the building in this way

**Resolved** that the Clerk will request the following:

* Chris Saunders be asked to engage with Council to provide some insight into the direction the County Borough are taking to safeguard the Swimming pool in Pontardawe
* That Building Control will be made aware that children are and the homeless are accessing the derelict chapel on James Street
* Could the County Borough Councillor arrange for the Clerk and a delegation of Councillors to meet with the Highways department to provide more details on the highways’ regulations.

## **12501: Grant Applications:**

Councillor S Todd took no part in any discussions or decisions on grants for Pontardawe Conservation Volunteers and Councillor Mrs J Lord took no part in the discussion or award of grants for the Friends of George V Park

* Pontardawe Conservation volunteers – Grant requested for £850 to support the Rhyd y Fro Summer family fete. Council was happy to award, however, they suggested that a raffle could be carried out to raise funds that could be used to supplement income for future fetes – **Awarded**
* Pontardawe Conservation volunteers – Grant requested for £1161.96 to place an additional metal picnic set at Cwmdu Glen – **Awarded**
* Royal British Legion – Grant requested of £500 for ‘Least we Forget’ flags to be placed in the flag holders at Pontardawe during Remembrance week. Council reviewed the design of the flag and as there was no Political connotations they were happy to award the grant – **Awarded**
* Pontardawe Townswomen’s guild - £500 requested towards an excursion for Members, many of who were seniors – **Awarded**
* Pontardawe Cricket Club – A grant for £1170 was requested for a replacement sponge for the water hog, sight screens and equipment -**Partial award £770 of the grant.**
* Friends of George V Park – Grant request for £500 towards the Fun day at George V Park - Council was happy to award however they suggested that a raffle could be carried out to raise funds that could be used to supplement income for future fun days – **Awarded**
* Pontardawe RFC Juniors section – A grant was requested to support a food and drink festival however unfortunately as the Pontardawe RFC had received a grant over £1000 late in 2023/24, no further awards could be made to the rugby club until a completion statement had been received for the previous grant.

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

## **Resolved** that the following grants be awarded- Pontardawe Conservation volunteers £850 & £1161.96, Royal British Legion £500, Pontardawe Townswomen’s guild £500, Pontardawe Cricket Club £770, Friends of George V Park £500.

## **12502: Clerks update on Eco and Wellbeing Committee including Cwmdu:**

Short Term projects identified and action required:

* MUGA at George V Park – Grant applications had been submitted awaiting response.
* Street Art Graffiti trail – Funds would be received from the grant providers by the 17th April. Unfortunately, the weather was still causing difficulties. Three boxes and one bench were still to be completed. There was also a small additional charge of less than £200 as a bench in Rhyd y Fro had been replaced and was no longer suitable, and an alternative had required preparation. It was agreed that Fresh Creative could be provided with a stage payment of up to £2500 with the balance to be paid once all the art work had been completed. Council was happy to cover the small additional charge from general reserves.
* Heritage trail project – The project was due to complete by the end of the April.
* CCTV Project – An update had been provided by the Operations Manager at Neath Port Talbot Council on the current position. Councillors would be advised of the details by the Clerk.
* Gwachel Roundabout – A response had been received from Neath Port Talbot Council stating that the Tesco roundabout would be cut back and further shrubs and trees had been authorised by for the Gwachel Roundabout. Council however wished details of what variety of shrubs and trees. They also wished to know if some of the other suggestions for improving the roundabouts could be considered via sponsorship.
* Neath Port Talbot Council Biodiversity grant – A grant application had been created for approximately £10,000 for additional work to be carried out at Cwmdu Glen and for clearance of non-native species at Gellionen Common. Council were happy to proceed with the application and would provide permission for way markers on their land at Cwmdu Glen.
* Riverside / Glanrhyd – Councillor Griffiths at Neath Port Talbot Council who was a cabinet Member for biodiversity, was in the process of obtaining information from Officers at Neath Port Talbot on Council’s behalf.

## **Resolved** that the following will be arranged:

* Graffiti Art Trail – Stage payment of £2500 to be arranged once a suitable invoice had been presented, and the balance of the invoice together with the additional cost of approx. £200 from Council General Reserves, to be paid following the completion of the project.
* CCTV project update to be emailed to Councillors
* Gwachel Roundabout – The Clerk to request details of the specific planting scheme. Councillor G Davies would make enquiries regarding sponsorship
* NPT Biodiversity grant application for £10,000 could be signed and submitted by the Clerk on Council’s behalf. Council provided official permission for way markers at Cwmdu

## **12503: Winterfest:**

Discussions on the type of celebration were still ongoing.

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

## **12504: Neath Port Talbot Youth Services:**

The draft application had been prepared and approved. As the original grant application period had now closed. We would need to await the next application window

**Resolved** to be noted.

## **12505: Pontardawe Swimming Pool:**

As Chris Saunders was unable to address Council at this time, Council would like to be informed what issues were being experienced as they wished to show the significant support, and strength of feeling, for the retention or replacement of the swimming pool at Pontardawe. An online petition to save the Swimming Pool had already received over 2500 signatures .

## **Resolved** that the Clerk will contact Chris Saunders.

## **12506: Welcome to Trebanos /Croeso I Drebannws sign:**

No further information was available

**Resolved** to be noted

**12507: Planning:**

None

**Licensing**

TEN – Pontardawe Inn (Dart board restriction)

Street Trading – George V Park

## **Resolved** to be noted.

## **12508: Special Committee re Place Plans held on the 8th April 2024:**

## **The Committee reviewed the creation of the Pontardawe Place Plan, Town Team involvement, the Urbanist and future plans:**

Background

The Town Team was set up in 2021, by a group of local people to put together some ideas for improvements, that could be put in place for Pontardawe, and the surrounding area. The group also included several Town Councillors.

Councillors reported back to Council during Town Council meetings with details of any discussions that might be of interest to the Town Council, they also informed the Town Team of the Town Council’s views and wishes.

The group loosely based its ideas on ‘Place Plans and Community Plans’ which were part of the Localism Act in England. In England the Place Plans created by communities could become supplementary planning law, however, in Wales this was not the case.

A Community and Place plan was however a structured way to introduce ideas for Town improvements. Place plans concerned changes to land and structure i.e. highways/parking/Parks etc while the associated Community plan concerned non-land-based changes i.e. festivals / group events/ bus services etc

Initially although Neath Port Talbot Council were aware of the Town Team, and provided planning guidance for the Team, there was no feedback given from the Team to Neath Port Talbot Council (the intention was that once the Town Team had created viable plans, and agreed them with the Town Council, then these would be forwarded to Neath Port Talbot Council)

The Town Council requested the Clerk complete minutes for the Team to assist them, however she was not a member of the Team.

In 2022 two community consultations were suggested – One for young people under 16 years and one for the general population in the Pontardawe area.

The children’s survey was rolled out, however, despite significant liaison and presentations within the schools, there had been a poor response. The more extensive survey was therefore postponed, with the intention of supplying a top down approach i.e. Putting together suggestions then asking for responses.

Early in 2023 the Town Council was advised that Neath Port Talbot Council had employed the Urbanists (a commercial company) to create Place Plans for Pontardawe, Neath and Port Talbot.

The last Town Team meeting was held during February 2023, as liaison with the Urbanists was considered paramount.

The following ideas were advised to the Urbanists via the Neath Port Talbot Town Centre Officer, some of which were already projects in progress, and some of which were merely ideas that could be added to the Urbanists consultation exercises

These were as follows:

MUGA - George V Park – Funding granted to the Friends of George V Park in partnership with Neath Port Talbot Council to refurbish the old tennis courts and surrounding area.

Village Green – Neath Port Talbot Council project – Staged funding had been agreed and the project was in progress – Land had been cleared, awaiting appointment of contractors

Community wellbeing space at the former Paradise Club – Private enterprise – Project in progress

Canal - reintroduction with WHARF adjacent to Retail park –A request had been made that the protected characteristic be returned to the Local Development plan following the 2022 plan review.

Pump track – Community Support however no current location/project proposals or funding

Allotments and community growing – Community Support and proposed location adjacent to Riverside on the Glanrhyd Industrial estate (raised beds would be required due to soil contamination) – No specific project proposals or funding available

Country Park – Glanrhyd Industrials estate initially (proposals to also include land under Cilybebyll Community Council ward on the opposite side of the A4067) – No specific project proposals/funding as yet however ideas suggested by the public including, a grassed area including ‘wildflower beds’, and shrubs, stage/bandstand, Gnoll-type adventure playground, Allotments, Bog Garden, (reed beds etc..), scented garden and art/sculpture trail. Also, better access, with more tables and benches and BBQ sites.

Suggestions that the area on the other side of the By-pass between the Ynysmeudwy roundabout and the Riverside roundabout could become a Nature Reserve -More family areas within Pontardawe would also be beneficial

Herbert Street one way – Proposal for one way from the Holly Street junction up Herbert Street to the Cross to encourage footfall to upper Herbert Street, the Village green and to link the lower Herbert Street shopping area to the High street shopping area, although full traffic management survey and consultation would be required.

CCTV – Project supported by the Neighbourhood policing team, Chamber of Commerce and the local community and originally proposed by Pontardawe Town Council (CCTV to cover Herbert Street, the cross and the Bypass roundabout) – Project funding secured with project in progress

Wesley Chapel – In private ownership and in poor repair – No current proposals

Heritage trail project - The heritage trail and community art work organised by a community group and currently in progress

Electrical box Graffiti trail (Trebanos, Pontardawe, Rhyd y Fro and Ynysmeudwy) – Project in progress

Christmas tree project – Project proposal to refurbish the Herbert Street Car Park garden. Proposal would include a mature Christmas tree, submitted and agreed by Pontardawe Town Council- Project now completed

It is unknown if the Town Team is to continue, however, Council was concerned that insufficient community consultation would take place, and that the Town Council would not have a method of input into the Urbanists plan.

A recent Place Plan workshop had been held in Neath by the Urbanists, which was the first contact between the community/Town Council and the creators of the Place Plan.

The workshop provided the impressions of Pontardawe by the Urbanists, and also requested input from the Community on what issues, wishes etc they had.

The Committee recommended the following action:

* Request details of the project plan and timescales from the Urbanist
* Details required of the number of future community consultations to be held, and if these would be held in Pontardawe
* Request a method of submitting information to the Urbanists by the Town Council and obtaining feedback

## **Resolved** that the Committees recommendations will be ratified and also that the Urbanists will be asked to visit Pontardawe in person if this has not already happened.

## **12509: Remembrance:**

The Pontardawe branch of the Royal British Legion provided details of events that were to take place during 2024. Council was also unsure of the covenant held by the British Legion with Neath Port Talbot Council.

## **Resolved** that the Clerk will make enquiries about the Covenant.

## **12510: Gelligron House:**

An update had been provided by the Clerk earlier in the meeting.

## **Resolved** to be noted

## **12511: Flag holders in Pontardawe:**

As several organisations were now utilising the flag holders in Pontardawe it was suggested that a calendar be created online to give details of what flags would be erected at what point in the year

**Resolved** that the Clerk will arrange for this information to be available for view online

## **12512: Youth Councillors :**

No applications had been received for the post of Youth Councillor and therefore the application period would be extended

**Resolved** to be noted.

## **12513: Town Council municipal insurance:**

The Town Council had entered an agreement with Zurich in 2023/24 and agreed to the same cover. The renewal date was 1st June 2024, with an increase in premium of less than £500

**Resolved** to be noted

## **12514: Account Schedule 413, Bank Reconciliation, direct debit list, bank balance check and Budget /Actual Report at the year-end:**

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

## **Resolved** that Account Schedule 413 totalling £30491.52 together with bank reconciliation for 2023/24, Direct Debit list for 2024/25 and Budget /Actual report at the 31/3/24 will be accepted by Council, in line with Standing Orders. Council was also advised that the bank account balances at end of year on the 31/3/24 had been checked and annotated by Councillor B Howells (non-signatory).

## **12515: One Voice Wales Membership :**

The Membership for 2024/25 was £1359.

**Resolved** that Membership of Once Voice Wales will be continued for 2024/25.

## **12516: One Voice Wales ‘Civility and Respect’ Pledge:**

Council was pleased to sign the Civility and Respect Pledge

**Resolved** that Pontardawe Town Council will sign the ‘Civility and Respect’ Pledge .

## **12517: Correspondence received requesting sponsorship of Dry-stone walling Event :**

Council was interested in the event and it was therefore suggested the organisation apply for grant funding

**Resolved** that a grant funding form will be forwarded to the organisation.

## **12518: Open Consultations:**

It was requested that Councillors respond individually.

Regional Transport plan development – Deadline for submission 19th April 2024

**Resolved** to be noted.

## **12519: Urgent Road Safety Matters and responses:**

None

## **Resolved** to be noted.

## **12520: Next Meeting:**

The next Ordinary Meeting and Annual General Meeting will take place on the 13th May 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 ……………………………………………………………………..