



## **Minutes of the meeting of Whitland Town Council held on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2020 via the medium of Zoom.**

**Present:** Cllr Barry Chapman, Gabriela Poore, Jenny Davies-Scourfield, Len Shipton, Avril Wilson, Mathew McDowall, Ffion Scourfield, Dave Walsh-Gibbon, Robert Morgan, Raymond Jones and County Cllr Sue Allen.

Also present – The Locum Clerk

- 1. To accept apologies for absence-** Cllr Rhys Davies
- 2. To receive correspondence from Cllr T R Jenkins MBE**

The Chair advised the Council that correspondence had been received by both himself and the previous Clerk from Cllr Ron Jenkins MBE advising that following a long service to Whitland Town Council he now wished to retire as Councillor and wished the Council all the best for the future.

Cllr Jenkins' letter was acknowledged by the Council and all Cllrs present wished Cllr Jenkins MBE all the best and stated he would be greatly missed.

- 3. To disclose personal and pecuniary interests** in the items listed below

Cllr McDowall declared a person interest in agenda item 10

- 4. To review and agree the minutes of the meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> and its continuation on 9<sup>th</sup> September 2020 and also meeting from 23<sup>rd</sup> September.** Cllr Poore noted that the Chair had recorded on vote to NOT enter into settlement agreement, then as a tied vote to enter into a settlement agreement. Minutes to be signed as a true record.

It was agreed by Council that the above three sets of Minutes are a true and accurate record of the meetings subject to note held on the 7<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> September and 23<sup>rd</sup> Sept 2020 and to signed by the Chair as such

### **5. Chair's report**

Over the last month/six weeks we have had a difficult time as a Council with meetings, extra meetings and discussions with ALLC Solicitor regarding the outgoing Clerk. The Staffing Committee has met several times and I thank Gabriela and Jenny for their commitment and support through these tough meetings and also Avril for conducting the exit interview.

As Chair I am involved in every committee/Working Party and the last 24 months have been hard going on time and commitment. Losing a Chair and then Richard as Vice-Chair while facing a pandemic has created many challenges which, as a Council, we have met head on and maintained a high professional standard.

This evening I am asking the Council to appoint a Vice Chair:- As Chair I have given more than 150 hours of voluntary time in the last 6 weeks, nothing I begrudge but by appointing a vice chair it will allow this 150 Hours to be shared!

The Vice Chair position is from now until AGM next year and the person appointed may or may not wish to become Chair in 2021 and is not obligatory.

I would like to officially welcome and thank Melanie Priestley for accepting the role of Locum Clerk, we are lucky to have been able to recruit a knowledgeable, experienced Clerk for the interim.

Following the staffing meeting The Locum Clerk and I worked through tonight's agenda until early hours of Wednesday Morning, locating documents, checking facts, reports etc. I even tried to teach Melanie some Welsh! If we have missed something I apologise in advance.

Apart from numerous meetings, I took part in a photo call with the return of “Rotary Bench” and responded to Public complaints on flooding and speeding which were passed on to the Clerk and CCC.

Finally I have been liaising with the Website designer and am pleased to announce the Whitland Town Council web site is up and running, there are a few snags to iron out - but I am sure you will agree it is looking good for starters.

#### **6. To consider any nominations for Vice Chair of Whitland Town Council**

Cllr Wilson proposed Cllr Poore as Vice Chair to Whitland Town Council; Cllr Allen seconded the proposal

Cllr Chapman proposed Cllr Davies-Scourfield as Vice Chair to Whitland Town Council; Cllr Shipton seconded the proposal.

As two nominations were received a secret ballot was held – as the meeting was being conducted by the medium of Zoom all Cllrs left the main screen and were called one by one to give the Locum Clerk their vote, following the voting all Cllrs were brought back to the main screen.

Cllr Davies-Scourfield received the majority of votes and made her Declaration of Office as Vice Chair – Cllr Chapman welcomed Cllr Davies-Scourfield as Vice Chair to Whitland Town Council.

Cllr Chapman, as Chair, exercised his Rights as per Standing Orders, to bring agenda items 12 and 13 forward.

#### **12 B/F Temporary Clerk’s arrangements**

Cllr Davies-Scourfield proposed that the outgoing Clerk be removed from the Banking Mandate, access to online banking be suspended and all banking correspondence be diverted to Llewellyn Davies Offices in Whitland; Cllr Shipton seconded the proposal with all Cllrs in full agreement. The Chair and Locum Clerk to make the appropriate arrangements with the bank.

Following the Staffing Committee meeting it was agreed that the following proposal would be put to full Council:

- For the Locum Clerk to prepare all the paperwork for the Council’s accounts and projects to be passed onto the new long term Clerk
- To establish the monthly workload and rate of pay for the new long term Clerk

Following discussion on the above two points Cllr Chapman proposed that the above two tasks be carried out by the Locum Clerk; Cllr Wilson seconded the proposal with all Cllrs in full agreement.

Due to the lack of any financial paper trail from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 Cllr Chapman proposed that Cllr Davies-Scourfield assist the Locum Clerk to prepare the financial audit trail; Cllr Shipton seconded the proposal with a majority vote in favour (two Cllrs abstained from the vote)

Cllr Allen questioned if the actions would be considered as an internal audit and were Cllrs qualified to conduct such a task, The Chair confirmed that his would be a reconciliation of financial records and not an Audit.

Cllr Chapman proposed that the Locum Clerk retrieves all Whitland Town Council records from Llewellyn Davies to enable all information required be accessible; Cllr Allen seconded the proposal with all Cllrs in full agreement.

Following consideration that the above tasks will incur considerable time to resolve Cllr Davies-Scourfield proposed that the Locum Clerk be paid for hours worked on the production of timesheets and works completed on a monthly basis; Cllr Scourfield seconded the proposal with all Cllrs in full agreement.

The Locum Clerk advised the Council that:

- certain expenses were claimed each month but not approved by Council before payment of such were made
- All Emails before the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 have been deleted, many Email conversations being partly deleted with some conversations between certain Cllrs being derogative towards other Cllrs
- when the accounts have been presented to the Council there have been figures omitted and no continuity between months. The omitting of figures is not a Data Protection issue – The name of the recipient should be omitted not the amount.

- the original SLCC Model Contract had been altered (prior to the presentation to Council) to award a six point pay scale increases in six months (the Model Contract states one point increase a year at the discretion of the Council) This Contract was received just prior to the meeting at which it was agreed, Cllrs accepting it as the SLCC Model Contract.

**13 B/F To acknowledge the recommendations put to Council by the Staffing Committee following the consideration of the Clerks exit interview**

Following consideration of the comprehensive report prepared by Cllr Wilson the Council agreed that:

- All Cllrs should, when available, attend trainings being offered by the relevant Authorities. As money has been budgeted for trainings, Cllrs are able to liaise with the Locum Clerk regarding trainings.
- Policies and Procedures require to be prepared from SLCC or One Voice Wales' model documents by the Policy and Procedure Committee and presented to the Full Council for adoption. Priority being given to Policies and Procedures appertaining to the employment of the long term Clerk
- The Council should aim to become a 'Competent Council' and consider the possibility of employing a fully qualified Clerk long term

Following the discussion Cllr Poole advised the Council that she wished to resign from the Staffing Committee – the resignation was accepted by the Chair. Cllr Chapman thanked her for service and then proposed from the Chair that even though it was a subject for the next meeting that, as a priority and to ensure continuity through the recruitment process, that a 3<sup>rd</sup> member be appointed.

Cllr Allen proposed, Cllr Wilson be appointed as the third Cllr on this Committee; Cllr Poore seconded the proposal.

Cllr Davies-Scourfield proposed that Cllr Scourfield be appointed as the third Cllr on the Staffing Committee

At this point Cllr Allen challenged that Cllr Davies-Scourfield should declare an interest and not propose Cllr Scourfield – The Locum Clerk advised the Council that it was the consideration of an individual Cllr to declare their interest if they considered it necessary and not the position of other Cllrs to advise such. Due to this challenge Cllr Scourfield withdrew from the nomination. A vote was taken regarding Cllr Allen's proposal with a majority vote in favour. Cllr Wilson accepted her role on the Staffing Committee.

**7. To receive following information and decide further actions as required:**

- a) Toilets cleaning regime recommendations – To be carried over to the November meeting

Cllr Allen advised the Council that the toilet door was still a hazard and should be repaired/replaced as soon as possible and that the hand dryer was still awaiting repair– The Locum Clerk to meet with the Council's handyman and seek prices as necessary regarding the door and to make contact with the electrician for an update regarding the repair of the hand dryer.

Cllr Allen proposed that the Clerk be given the delegated power to arrange for the toilet door to be repaired/replaced up to the value of £670.00 plus VAT; Cllr Chapman seconded the proposal with all Cllrs in full agreement.

Cllr Morgan and Jones left the meeting – Due to work commitments. Cllr Chapman suggested a Comfort break and suspended Standing Orders at 20:50hrs

- b) Trevaughan community orchard and the Carbon Footprint free trees (20) – locations – To consider a working party to manage this as one project

It was agreed that a working party be formed to carry this project forward – Members Cllrs Walsh-Gibbo/n, Poore, Allen, Davies-Scourfield, Wilson and Ms V Mitchel.

- c) Draft donations and joint projects policy – As Emailed to all Cllrs prior to the meeting - For adoption

Cllr Wilson proposed that the two policies as prepared by the outgoing Clerk and presented to all Cllrs prior to the meeting be adopted by Whitland Town Council; Cllr Allen seconded the proposal with all Cllrs in full agreement.

- d) Resolution of tennis court issues – Update if any

Following discussion Cllr Allen advised the Locum Clerk that she would forward the Email thread regarding correspondence with the contractors to enable the Locum Clerk to liaise with the contractors to resolve the problem of weeds.

- e) Christmas Committee meeting feedback – Report Emailed to all Cllrs prior to the meeting

It was agreed that the Government imposed restrictions would be followed regarding the supporting/holding of any Christmas events. The Locum Clerk to ensure that the Christmas Light contractor is aware that the preference for lights is warm, twinkling lights.

- f) Cllrs discussions with residents on seating and ways to help in the coming months – Len and Averil

Whitland Town Council are considering the placement of covered seating ‘parklets’ to enable patrons of local businesses to adhere to Government imposed social distancing guidelines while eating and drinking. Cllrs Shipton and Wilson to coordinate a public survey to ascertain if and where these pods could be placed. Within the survey patrons of business will have to be advised as to what exactly a ‘parklet’ is. These would not be funded by the Whitland Town Council.

- g) Tree survey – As Emailed to all Cllrs prior to the meeting. To consider requesting prices for works to be carried out within the next 3 and 6 months respectively as per the report.

Following discussion the Locum Clerk to ascertain which of the trees surveyed are in the ownership/liability of the Whitland Town Council. Once this has been established Cllr Chapman proposed that the Locum Clerk seek prices for the removal of 6 trees as per the report (if in the ownership of the Whitland Town Council); Cllr Wilson seconded the proposal with all Cllrs in full agreement.

The metal surrounds around certain trees require to be removed. The Locum Clerk to advise the handyman of such.

- h) To consider application for dropped kerb in car park- related to Parklets discussion in September meeting

The Locum Clerk to contact Carmarthenshire County Council regarding the insertion of dropped kerbs

- i) Speeding in Trevaughan area. To confirm this matter has been passed to Carmarthen County Council

Cllr Allen confirmed such

- j) To finalise the cancellation procedure with XLN regarding Town Wifi

The Locum Clerk to liaise with XLN regarding the Town Wifi and report back to Council at the November meeting.

#### **8. To discuss new items of business:**

- a) Pocket Park – Email received raising concerns over the possibility of the support legs being rotten

The Locum Clerk to liaise with the Handyman and seek three prices for the repair of such for presentation to the Council at the November/December meeting

- b) To consider the Council purchasing the Licence for Zoom (as this is the platform that Cllrs are now familiar with) to enable Remote meetings to continue uninterrupted.

Following discussion on whether the Council should purchase the Licence for Zoom (£142) or move and use the free version of Teams – the decision of such to be held over to the November 2020 meeting once Teams can be tried at the next meeting – ie Staffing Committee meeting. Cllrs raised concerns as the use of Zoom has been established and to move to a different medium could cause further confusion and possibly prevent some Cllrs from attending meetings.

#### **9. To receive County Councillor’s report**

Available on request – Sent as PDF Document (Word document requested)

#### **10. To receive planning reports: -**

PL/00130. Non material amendment to W/35881 – to step back the extension on the first storey by approx. 150-200 mm. 14 Lon Hywel, Whitland. Approved 26-8-2020.

**11. To receive correspondence:**

Summary title	Received	Forwarded to Cllrs
CCC LDP consultation extension (information only)	11-09-2020	11-09-2020
ProsiectFory (Information only – One Voice Wales)	09-09-2020	11-09-2020

The Locum Clerk advised the Council that correspondence had been received on the 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020 from the External Auditor requesting further information appertaining to the variance of over 40% regarding the increase in Clerks wages from 2018/19 and 2019/20 – The outgoing Clerk had responded to this Email providing past Minutes.

**12. Temporary Clerk’s arrangements – As above**

**13. To acknowledge the recommendations put to Council by the Staffing Committee following the consideration of the Clerks exit interview.** Recommendations Emailed to all Cllrs prior to this meeting – As above

**14. Financial Report and Bank/cashbook Reconciliation –** Due to change of Clerk this will be presented at the November meeting

**15. Invoices for consideration:** As prepared by the outgoing Clerk

Tree Landscapes – Tree Report	£647.34	Cheque to be raised
CLLR Law – Solicitors Costs	£420.00	Cheque to be raised
Clerk’s salary and expenses for previous month		
John Lewis salary and expenses for previous month		
B+CE Holdings Ltd – pension payment		
EDF energy – electricity for toilet -	£33.00	direct debit
Welsh Water – water supply for toilet -	£20.50	direct debit
XLN business services CCTV line -	£71.33	direct debit
Llewelyn Davies – payroll services -	£23.00	direct debit
Rob Thomas – grass cutting - October payment	£480.00	direct debit

Following a discussion on how accounts will be presented to the Council in future, Cllr Wilson proposed that the above payments be made in full; Cllr Poore seconded the proposal with all Cllrs in full agreement.

**16. Items for next meeting**

Policies and procedures to be adopted by the Whitland Town Council be proposed by the Committee.

**17. To confirm date of next meeting –** Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2020, remotely via Zoom, 7.00pm.

Meeting closed 22.37pm