



# GRAIG COMMUNITY COUNCIL

## Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held remotely via Email and Phone between 20<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup> March 2020

**Responders:** Cllrs R Caston (phone), A Whitfield (email), D Evans (phone), M Smart (email), P Gregory (email), W Haigh (phone), L Fry (email), J Bailey (email), K Thomas (text), N Tarr (email), J Taylor (email).

**Non-Responders:** Cllrs K Sayer, J Harris, P Appleton, S Grey, D Williams, M Cornelious.

The intention of this meeting was to determine emergency measures to ensure Graig Community Council would be able to continue to function in a basic way to meet its obligations and financial responsibilities during the time which social distancing was being practiced by all members. To enable bills to be paid, obligations to met, audits to be performed and any urgent business that could not be deferred until later could be dealt with.

The meeting consisted of Members being provided with an agenda and accompanying notes. These were read at each Member's homes and responses were provided to the Clerk either via email, or for those not having that facility, via a phone conversation with the Clerk. These minutes have been produced from the responses to those emails and phone conversations.

Under the circumstances, members of the public were not invited to participate as this would be extremely difficult to manage. All evidence from the meeting correspondence will be kept and is available for scrutiny if necessary.

Cllr Tarr expressed concern that the meeting was being held remotely and suggested some form of video conferencing would be more suitable. The Clerk responded to him stating that any method of meeting that was not being held face-to-face and inviting the public to attend was not within recognised current legislation. These were extraordinary times and extraordinary measures to enable arrangements to be put in place for the continuing basic needs of Council must be taken. There was no legislation which covered this eventuality, and therefore unusual measures needed to be taken now and would be discussed at a later date. The reason for choosing to conduct this meeting in this manner was to allow all Councillors to participate if they wished, but as some did not have internet facilities, video conferencing would exclude them from the process and be unfair.

- 1. Minutes:** The minutes of the meeting held 12<sup>th</sup> February 2020 previously circulated were read and approved. Proposed Cllr Haigh, seconded Cllr Sayer. There were no matters arising from the minutes raised by any Cllr. **Action: None necessary.**

### 2. Accounts for payment

Cllr Gregory proposed the Clerk be paid in advance via post-dated cheques for April and May to prevent her having to struggle to get payments authorised during the lockdown period, and that the accounts be accepted, this was seconded by Cllr Caston and approved. The only other comments were from Cllr Tarr with suggestions of paying via BACS or DD. The Clerk informed him that all bills that could be paid via DD were already being paid in that manner, and that internet banking and BACS payments were not available due to the current banking set-up and the need for proper procedures to be followed to prevent the opportunity for fraudulent activity.

Clerk salary and office allowance for March 2020	£2068.57
Clerk salary & office allowance for April 2020 (pre-dated cheque)	£2068.57
Clerk salary & office allowance for May 2020 (pre-dated cheque)	£2068.57
Misc expenses for March 2020 (Fuel)	£33.30
TSO Host – monthly webmail charge (taken by DD)	£5.00
Vision ICT – creation & hosting of 12 Council email addresses for 12 months	£259.20
Vision ICT - creation & hosting of 1 additional Council email address for 12 months	£21.60
Complete Business Solutions – office supplies (inks & archive storage)	£134.39
Cllr N Tarr – final Cllr IRPW allowance payment for 2019/20	£37.50
Cllr J Harris – Cllr IRPW allowance payment for 2019/20	£150.00
SSE – Gas payment for Rhiwderin CC Feb-Mar 2020 plus arrears payment (taken by DD)	£1033.30
SSE – Gas payment for Graig Hall Feb-Mar 2020	£216.66
<b>Total</b>	<b>£8091.71</b>

**Receipts** None to date

### 3. Items for discussion:

- a. Emergency measures due to Coronavirus – The following statement was agreed by a majority of 10/1. This was proposed by Cllr Gregory and seconded by Cllr Caston.

***Agreed Standing Orders and Financial Regulations of the Council are suspended for an interim period of 3 months from 25<sup>th</sup> March 2020 and after this time, if necessary, the limit be extended until British Government advises that normal business can be resumed and meetings can be held. Delegated authority is given to the Clerk and Chair to carry out all and any business needs of this Council including any necessary financial obligations, operating needs and wellbeing needs of our community and any other business that is deemed to be the responsibility of our Council.***

**Action: Chairman and Clerk to liaise and perform all necessary duties, to only make decisions for matters that are pressing and cannot be deferred until a full Council meeting can be held as normal. The Clerk to record all decisions made and actions taken so they may be reported as and when necessary to Council Members.**

- b. Bassaleg Allotments – The Clerk reported that the Allotment Association asked if Council intended to raise the allotment rents for 2020/21. Cllr Caston reported that as the actual costs for running the site this year were well below the income in rents, it was felt not necessary to increase rent at this time. It was also suggested that as a gesture of goodwill for the work the Allotment Association does and in recognition that this year many allotment holders will be unable to tend their plots for long periods of time, Council could determine not to charge plot holders any rent for the 2020/21 period. This was agreed by Cllrs Gregory, Caston, Whitfield and Haigh and was not opposed by any other Member. Therefore, this proposal was accepted. It was also reported that the Association had some rubbish on site to dispose of which they were trying to find a cost-effective way of dealing with. Some time ago Council authorised a payment of up to £300 to assist with rubbish removal so Cllr Caston asked the Clerk to notify them this was available to assist with costs if necessary. **Action: Clerk to inform the association of funding available for rubbish removal and that no rents will be collected for the 2020/21 rental period.**
- c. Council Website – No comments were made on this item save for Cllr Gregory who asked that the new website currently being overseen by Cllr Appleton be finalised and launched asap and advised the group that Cllr Smart had kindly agreed in the interim period to update the old site. **Action: Cllr Appleton to oversee the launch of the new website and Cllr Smart and the Clerk to liaise to provide information and advice regarding the Coronavirus outbreak on the old website. Cllr Smart to look over the site and update items where she was able.**
- d. Outstanding Issues/Work etc.: Cllr Gregory asked everyone to use the confinement time to research ideas for the proposed memorial garden project. **Action: Cllrs to look at the Memorial Garden project and research ideas for its creation.**
- f. Planters etc.: It was suggested by most Cllrs that for the time being, only maintenance to planters and other areas (such as weeding if possible) should be carried out until things return to normal. **Action: All those able, to perform some maintenance of the planters and areas in Council's care if safe for them to do so and they are passing by on allowed exercise regimes.**

### 4. Urgent other business not on the agenda

- a. Cllr Fry submitted the following as information for the group:  
*Fort View Play Area* -Rob has cut down the brambles and shrubs which are indicated on my site layout. This work has been done in order to minimise any disturbance to nesting birds. Removal of arisings from the work and ground reinstatement will be completed at a later date, as and when ground conditions are suitable for heavy vehicles. My schedule dated 15.09.17 refers.  
*Wentworth Lane and Footpath to Berkley Close* -Rob has completed the clearance of overgrown shrubbery and builder's debris as described in my schedule dated 07.03.20
- b. Cllr Thomas expressed concerns around the finishing of the car park area created at the Scout Hut.  
**Action: Clerk to monitor and address if necessary.**

### 5. Dates of next meetings

No meetings to be held until further notice.

**To note – Information received following meeting from One Voice Wales on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2020:**

*NALC stated “We are expecting government guidance on holding meetings remotely. In the meantime, if local councils decide to not hold meetings and take decisions by e-mail or other remote methods NALC feels it is likely that afterwards if there were a challenge that the courts will accept that exceptional times called for exceptional measures. In the absence of government guidance, we would suggest for now only taking decisions remotely for truly urgent issues. In this case, local councils should evidence their decision making as best they can, for example by asking councillors to confirm their votes by e-mail to the Clerk to keep as a record of the decision.’*

Approved by the Chairman Cllr Gregory on 06<sup>th</sup> April 2020

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