

BETWS COMMUNITY COUNCIL

The monthly meeting of Betws Community Council was held as a Hybrid Meeting at **Betws RFC** and virtually on **Microsoft Teams** on Wednesday 13th December 2023 at 7.00pm.

The meeting was held on a remote basis in accordance with the provisions of the Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Meetings) (Wales) Regulations 2020 and Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

Any member of the public who wishes to attend the meeting as a spectator or who has questions to put to the Councillors should contact the Clerk for this to be able to take place and the correct procedure to be followed.

The meeting started at 19:10

PRESENT: Cllr Dave Stacey (Chairperson), Cllrs Peter Comley, Paul Allchurch, Emyr Morgan, Carwyn James, Maureen Williams, Jose Picouto, Mike Jones and James Derrick with Karen McMinn-Davies joining via Teams.

County Councillor: Betsan Jones

Clerk: Miss Angela Brown

PCSO: Not present

1. Public Questions/Representations

None

2. Apologies

Cllr Lynwen Phillips

3. Declaration by Members of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

Cllr Comley re point 12 on the agenda.

The Chair proposed that some items were moved forward on the agenda as Cllr Comley may need to leave the meeting early. Point 12a), b) and c) and 13d regarding the defibrillator project.

Exempt Matters –

a)Betws RFC and Land issue at Heol Y Felin (if any correspondence received)

Update from Peter Comely regarding the letter sent by the Community Council's solicitor on 21 September 2023 with regards to a formal assignment being required and the need to update the changes with the Land Registry.

Peter updated members regarding an issue with Directors at Betws RFC which they are in the process of getting legal advice once agreed a formal assignment will be done and a copy sent to the Community Council solicitors.

He also mentioned that the trailers owned by the residents of 12c Heol Y Felin had now both gone from the RFC car park and the area was tidy. Also that the car that had been left on the car park had also been removed.

b) Peter Comley Dispensation application – Update – Cllr Comley

Cllr Comley had given by hand this evening a completed dispensation form which the clerk will scan and forward to the relevant department at Carmarthenshire County Council.

c) Update ref Betws RFC Lease - Cllr Peter Comley to update members.

The new and correct lease has been signed by both parties however there is a dispute regarding fees which is in discussion.

Cllr Comley informed members that the WRU has no money until April 2024.

The utilities for the club will be increasing significantly in February 2024.

Discussion regarding the fact that several of RFC's are in financial difficulty and others have closed due to financial burdens. The costs involved with the cup games and the cost of transport to and from the games costing a significant amount which may become prohibitive.

Business at the club is ticking over however trade is less than a quarter of the amount that it should be to ensure that all outgoings are covered.

Defibrillator Project – update from Cllrs Comley/Picouto

Discussion regarding the packs for the rugby club going out of date in a years time with the packs costing £70 for 2. The newer type of defibrillators have battery packs which cost significantly less at £5. Members discussed funding for a new cheaper defibrillator in the future to lessen the oncosts of the battery packs for the older defibrillator.

Councillor Comley informed members of an incident was discussed that occurred on Betws Road where due to an error at Ambulance control the closest defibrillator was taken off the circuit when the emergency phone call was made and not when the code was given when the caller reached the defibrillator. There was an issue with no code being available for the next nearest defibrillator which was at the RFC the caller was sent to Parc Yr Ynn school bypassing closer defibrillators which were located at the Family Centre, Ty Coch, Tesco, the Fire and Police stations. Cllr Comley has been to the school to discuss the problem that occurred.

Cllr Comley got in touch with his defibrillator contact regarding his concerns about this recent incident and a previous incident whereby the defibrillator was not returned after use to its cabinet. The error made by the operator was a simple error which ambulance control are aware of. Stickers are being placed onto the defibrillators with Cllr Comley's phone number so that users who are unable to return the defibrillator to its cabinet can contact him and he will return the defibrillator if necessary.

2 Defibrillator courses are being arranged which will be held at the RFC.

Cllr Williams asked Cllr Comley a question regarding the opening of the club which he clarified informing members of the cctv coverage and that more signage will be going up.

19:46 Councillor McMinn-Davies joined the meeting on Teams.

4. County Councillor Report

1. I received a revised plan for the placement of double yellow lines at the bottom of Pentwyn Road which will go as far as No 6 and double yellow lines will be placed on the corner adjacent to Betws Park. A notice will be placed on a telegraph pole as letters are no longer sent to residents.

2. On 22/11/23 I attended a zoom meeting with Ammanford Foodbank who feed 4,500 people. In the last 3 years the need has gone up by 75%. The Help Centre in 2022 made more than £200,000 of financial gains for 500 different clients.

There is a green container which is at end of life, and they are putting in a planning application to CCC and were looking for somewhere to store the items from the Amman Centre. There is a need for the Food Bank.

3. The new robust sign for above Scotch Pines is ready and her contact will let her know when it goes up. It was funded the Levelling Up fund from the UK Government.

4. Update regarding 13 b) Maesquarre Playground Grant for the Inclusive Roundabout from Mynydd Y Betws. The meeting was held on 17/11/23, unfortunately it was decided that they would not support Capital funding only Revenue funding however the Community Councils application was very strong. A suggestion of applying for the Levelling Up fund was made and she had contacted Cllr Phillips regarding this. She also suggested that they could apply for funding for the electric source at Maesquarre Playground so that the Christmas Tree can be lit there in future.

£2,363.00 grant from the Community's Lottery had been received which is for the match funding for the Inclusive Roundabout. This will be kept specifically in reserves for this purpose until the remainder of the money needed is in place.

5. She informed members that Cllr Allchurch had contacted her whilst he was at the monthly surgery at the RFC as a resident walking his dog had approached him regarding the volume of leaves that were on the road near Woodlands Park. She informed members that she had contacted CCC who are more reactive than proactive now due to costs. Cllr Allchurch will contact the resident.

The Clerk informed members that she had contacted HMRC regarding the VAT exception that had been applied for and was told that there is a backlog of 3,000 cases which are being worked through. They are currently working on letters from July, the operator spoke to his manager who has marked the file which is waiting for a decision so hopefully it will be attended to sooner.

Cllr Picouto informed members that his wife Jayne as Deputy Lord Lieutenant for Carmarthenshire had been approached by a War Memorial Group asking if there were any requirements in her area for improvements. She has nominated Betws and Ammanford. At the moment it is a fact-finding exercise regarding any hidden costs/who carries out the work etc. The sleepers in the Memorial Garden area replacing as they are decaying. They will be sending an email regarding the details in due course to the clerk.

The above report was **NOTED** by members.

County Councillor Jones wished everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year and left the meeting at 20:04.

5. To confirm and Sign the Minutes of the Monthly Meeting held on 8th November 2023

Councillor Allchurch proposed and Councillor Williams seconded and resolved that the minutes of the Council's monthly meeting held on 8th November 2023 be accepted as a true record and approved by all present.

6. Dyfed Powys Police Monthly Crime Figures for Betws

A total of 5 crimes for October 2023 in Betws broken down as follows:

- 1 – Anti Social Behaviour (ASB)
- 2 – Violence and Sexual Offences
- 2 – Shoplifting

The link for Betws ward below.

[Betws | Police.uk \(www.police.uk\)](http://www.police.uk)

7. Payments/Donation Requests –

a. Clerk Salary and Allowances and Invoices to be paid (see document below)

Payments Made in December 2023			
MEETING/BACS REFERENCE	PAYEE	DETAILS	AMOUNT
13/12/2023 point 7a	Angela Brown	Clerks Salary/Allowances and office expenses. Section 112 Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) LG(FP)A 1963 s5	(as per Clerk Salary and Payroll schedule)
13/12/2023 point 7a	HMRC	Payroll payments. Section 112 Local Government Act 1972 (as amended)	(as per Clerk Salary and Payroll schedule)
13/12/2023 point 7a	Nest Pension paid by Direct Debit	Payroll Pension payments. Section 112 Local Government Act 1972 (as amended)	(as per Clerk Salary and Payroll schedule)
13/12/2023 point 7a	Wrenvale	Betws Park Qtr 2 Maintenance and general upkeep of	£ 3,465.00 VAT £ 693.00 Total £ 4,158.00

		Betws Park (as per management plan) Public Health Act 1875, s.164 – Power to provide and manage recreation grounds.	
13/12/2023 point 7a	Wrenvale	Heol Y Felin Qtr 2 Green and Playground Maintenance and general upkeep of Betws Park (as per management plan) Public Health Act 1875, s.164 – Power to provide and manage recreation grounds.	£ 370.00 VAT £ 74.00 Total £ 444.00
13/12/2023 point 7a	Wrenvale	Maesquarre Park/Playground Qtr 2 Maintenance and general upkeep of Betws Park (as per management plan) Public Health Act 1875, s.164 – Power to provide and manage recreation grounds.	£ 490.00 VAT £ 98.00 Total £ 588.00
13/12/2023 point 7a	Councillor Peter Comley	Betws Park Railings Maintenance Paint x 3 for Community Payback Team	£ 76.00 VAT £ 15.20 Total £ 91.20

		Public Health Act 1875, s.164 – Power to provide and manage recreation grounds.	
13/12/2023 point 7a	R A Computers	Laptop Microsoft 365 1 year Laptop set up Deliver and install Bench and restructure One Drive files and folders LG(FPA) 1963 s.5 and Section 58 Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013	£415.83 £ 49.99 £ 60.00 £ 25.00 VAT £110.16 Total £660.98
13/12/2023 point 7a	Wales Audit	Audit Fees for 2022/2023 LGA 1972 s.111	£200.00

It was proposed by Councillor James and seconded by Councillor Williams and agreed by all present that the above payments are authorised, and it was **RESOLVED** by all that the above be paid.

The Clerk informed members that she had contacted OVO regarding the Christmas Tree lighting twice via email but had not yet had a reply. She had also contacted the phone number on the last invoice she'd received from 29/01/2020 from SSE regarding the Christmas Lighting the company is now Enervo and they do not procure electricity. The box in Betws Park is an unmetered supply. SSE were charging the Community Council for the storage of the Christmas Lights at their Depot in Swansea and for erecting and removing the lights each year with no charge being made for the usage.

Cllr M Jones stated that the clerk had done everything she can, offered and tried to get the electricity usage paid and they've not replied. I suggest we do no more. This was **NOTED** by members.

The Christmas tree was not erected in 2020 or 2021 due to the coronavirus pandemic but was in 2022 and this year.

The clerk also informed members that she had contacted HMRC again regarding their VAT exception request and had been told that there is backlog of 3,000 cases due to staff shortages. The case has been marked as urgent and will hopefully be dealt with sooner rather than later. They are currently working on correspondence from July 2023 and the last correspondence was returned in August 2023. This was **NOTED** by members.

The Chair informed members that he had an invoice that he would send to the clerk regarding the purchase of more Christmas Tree Lights for the sum of £101.97 a sum had been agreed in a previous meeting of spending up to £150.

The Chair also proposed that with regards to the Volunteer Group in Betws Park that 2 payments are agreed as follows:

1. The volunteers to procure some bare root dogwood which were damaged in an error in mowing by the contractor up to the value of £50 as a goodwill gesture and to provide the Council with the invoice to reimburse the group.
2. That up to £100 be allocated for various seeds that can be used by the Volunteer Group, schools and college groups that attend at the Nature Garden and its growing areas for 2024/2025. The Volunteer Group are to give a list of the seeds they want for the Community Garden in the first instance and once agreed with the Council to provide the Council with an invoice to reimburse the group.

This was seconded by Cllr McMinn-Davies and agreed by all present.

A discussion ensued regarding the grant received and the various correspondence from Rachel Carter and Social Farms and Gardens. Cllr M Jones stated that the Community Council have the responsibility for the whole of Betws Park and they are grateful for the Volunteers who help in looking after it. Maybe the contractor with his expertise could advise regarding the seeds for the Community. The park management plan is still work in progress.

b) Donation Requests –

- i) Carmarthenshire Young Farmers
- ii) National Urdd Eisteddfod
- iii) The Urdd's Fund for All appeal

A discussion ensued and it was agreed that due to the ongoing costs of maintaining the end-of-life playground equipment that no donations would be given at this time. This was proposed by Cllr Picouto and was seconded by Cllr Allchurch and agreed by all.

It was **RESOLVED** that the clerk contact the above to inform.

c) To Agree the Precept for 1 April 2024 – 31 March

It was proposed by the Chair of the Finance Committee Cllr James that the precept be increased by £5,000 to £57,000 for 2024/2025 due to the liabilities of the 3 parks whose maintenance won't get any cheaper. This was seconded by Cllr M Jones who informed members that Council needed £76 - £80,000 to be able to have a functioning maintenance/sinking fund for the areas. This was agreed by all present. The Clerk informed members that CCC were having a meeting later in the week regarding the precept and that an email would be sent after that with the precept form to be printed and signed which will be brought to the next meeting.

The Chair informed members at 20:32 that there would be a 5-minute comfort break.

The meeting re-started at 20:40.

8. Planning Applications –

The following applications were received:

PL/06612 Land off Pentwyn Road consultation period ends 2/1/2024.

Discussion ensued and there are no objections, council to request S106 funding for improvement to Maesquarre playground and area including replacing the end-of-life playground equipment which was inherited from Carmarthenshire County Council when the transfer of the asset by licence was made in 2019 to the Community Council.

It was **RESOLVED** that the clerk contact the planning department regarding the above application.

The following applications were granted/refused/withdrawn:

PL/06698 34 Betws Road Variation to condition was granted on 22/11/2023.

The above information was **NOTED** by members.

9. Correspondence/Matters for Information/Action (emails sent out to members)

- a) Police and Crime Commissioner Bulletin (email sent 21/11/2023)
- b) Have your say about your Fire Service - Community Risk Management Plan 2040 - Consultation - consultation until Monday, 15 January 2024 (email sent 21/11/2023)
- c) The Welsh Government public consultation on a new Road Safety Strategy closes 31st January 2024. (email sent 21/11/2023)
- d) Police and Crime Commissioner - Policing Budget Consultation (email sent 21/11/2023 & 7/12/2023)
- e) State of Caring in Wales (email sent 21/11/2023)
- f) OVW training dates by module - November & December (email sent 21/11/2023)
- g) Carmarthenshire Winter Pride 2023 event (email sent 21/11/2023)
- h) Section 137 Expenditure Limit for 2024-25 (email sent 21/11/2023)
- i) Minister's letter re. Asbestos Management (email sent 21/11/2023)
- j) Future Generations Commissioner - Cymru Can – Future Generations Cymru Strategy (email sent 21/11/2023)
- k) FREE WEBINAR One Voice Wales & IRPW webinar - Monday 27th November 2023 (email sent 21/11/2023)
- l) What's On at Ty Dyffryn (email sent 21/11/2023)
- m) One Voice Wales' Cost of Living Crisis Team (email sent 21/11/2023)
- n) Dementia Communities Development Officer (email sent 21/11/2023)
- o) Town & Community Councils update from CCC (email sent 27/11/2023)
- p) Mid and West Wales fire and rescue authority draft community risk management plan (email sent 27/11/2023)
- q) West Wales utilities (WWU) Regional Business Planning stakeholder workshop – November 30th (email sent 27/11/2023)
- r) Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales Draft Annual Report - February 2024 (email sent 5/12/2023)
- s) Presentation by the IRPW (email sent 5/12/2023)
- t) One Voice Wales - News Bulletin (email sent 5/12/2023)
- u) One Voice Wales National Awards Conference 27/03/2024 (email sent 5/12/2023)
- v) New consultation: Local Government Finance (Wales) Bill - responses by 15 January 2024(email sent 5/12/2024)

- w) Cohesion in our Communities (email sent 5/12/2023)
- x) Audit Wales Newsletter – November 2023 (email sent 5/12/2023)
- y) Public Services Ombudsman for Wales press release - Equality and Human Rights Casebook (email sent 5/12/2023)
- z) Wales Climate Week reminder 4 – 8 December 2023 (email sent 5/12/2023)
- aa) Go Red in February 2024 British Heart Foundation Campaign (email sent 5/12/2024) –

Proposal from Cllr Allchurch - have a coffee/information morning in the Rugby Club on Saturday morning - exact date to be determined – discussion. Discussion ensued, this was **NOTED** by members is referred to the Events Committee to organise. Cllr Comley informed members that the RFC would be available and that they have a hot water urn for teas and coffees. Cllr Allchurch and committee to produce information that can be placed in the Betws News section of the SW Guardian and a Poster that can be circulated via the various village social media platforms.

- bb) IRPM draft consultation on draft annual report 2024-2025 – response date extended to 20/12/2023 (email sent 12/12/2023)
- cc) Community Fridges projects (email sent 12/12/2023)
- dd) Ammanford Foodbank (email sent 12/12/2023)

The points above are all **NOTED** by members unless otherwise stated.

10. To approve the report from the Betws RFC annual lease check carried out by both Councillor McMinn-Davies who did the document check and visual checks carried out by Councillor Stacey.

Councillor McMinn-Davies informed members that she had produced a spreadsheet of what to look at, date and signature and which part of the lease it refers to for the annual lease check which is carried out by the Council. The only outstanding certificate was the Fire Certificate which has been received and she will meet up with Peter to see it by the next meeting.

Councillor McMinn-Davies is happy to conduct the lease check with Peter Comley for 2023 – 2024 year in January 2024.

Councillor McMinn-Davies will circulate the spreadsheet that she has produced to all members and the clerk for their perusal.

11. To consider a motion to exclude the public and members of the press with regards to matters in point 12 due to the confidential nature under Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) 1960, s.1 (2) and Local Government Act 1972, s. 100 (2)

12. Exempt Matters –

- a) Betws RFC and Land issue at Heol Y Felin (if any correspondence received)
- b) Peter Comley Dispensation application – Update – Cllr Comley
- c) Update ref Betws RFC Lease - Cllr Peter Comley to update members.

This point was covered earlier in the meeting.

13. Feedback from Committees/Working Group/Outside Bodies (all minutes of the Committee Meetings can be viewed on the Community Council Website where the Full Council Meeting minutes are also available as per 26ZA (1) (2) of Schedule 12 of the Local Government Act 1972 and section 55 (c) of Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013):

a) Recreation Ground Committee –

Betws Park –

- i) Update – (email sent 30/11/2023) Cllr Phillips – Cllr Phillips had sent her apologies for the meeting.
- ii) Update regarding painting of Betws Park railings – Cllr Comley there have been staffing issues with the community payback team due to a shortage of supervisors.
- iii) Correspondence received regarding Collection of Leaves - This was **NOTED** by members.
- iv) Correspondence received regarding The Community Land Advisory Service Cymru Awards 13th March 2024 – Cllr Derrick to attend in his dual hatted role as both a member of the Council and a member of the Volunteer Group for Betws Park.
- v) Correspondence received from Volunteer Group including railings repair email 5/12/23 and Resilience plan with Augusta from Farm Garden for Nature Garden (7/12/23) – Discussion ensued with Cllrs McMinn-Davies, Derrick, Jones and Stacey being available at 9 am on 23, 24 or 25 January 2024.

Cllr Stacey informed members that he would send an email to Augusta with the above dates to see which date was suited and inform members of the date in due course.

- vi) Compliments received from Wrenvale (sent 16/11/2023) – This was **NOTED** by members.
- vii) Correspondence regarding Christmas Lights – OVO if replied regarding energy bill for electricity usage – this was covered in point 7 above.

b) Maesquarre and Heol Y Felin Playground – update –

- i) Annual Playground Inspection Reports and the findings in the reports (email sent 27/11/2023) - Cllr Phillips had sent her apologies for the meeting this will be covered in the next meeting.
- ii) update re Grant applications – Cllr Phillips – County Councillor B Jones updated members in her report earlier in the meeting.

c) Finance and Staffing Committee – update Cllr James – who informed members that he had checked the accounts and congratulated Angela informing members that all is in order and methodical. Cllr Stacey is working on updating the spreadsheets to make them easier to read during the Christmas period. The Financial regulations were revised, and they are to be kept as is. The annual National Salary Agreement for the clerk's salary scale was agreed. The precept was discussed in detail. The next quarterly meeting will be on 17 January 2024 with feedback to members in the February meeting.

d) **Defibrillator Project** – update from Cllrs Comley/Picouto
This point was covered earlier in the meeting.

e) **Community Engagement and Events Committee** – Update - Cllr Allchurch

- i) Remembrance Service – this was a good event.
- ii) November and December Surgery at Betws RFC – discussion ensued regarding the lack of attendance by residents and suggestion that an evaluation is made in January with the potential to change it to a Monday at the RFC when the Family Centre attend as more people may engage. Previously the Council held the surgeries in the half an hour before the monthly meetings commenced i.e. at 18:30 – 19:00 attendance was also poor for this. It was discussed that some youngsters don't know what a Community Council is.

Councillor Allchurch suggested having quarterly events such as something for St David's Day, Summer Fun Day, an Autumn Event along with the annual Remembrance Service and Christmas Lights Event to try and engage more with the community.

Table for Committees to hold their quarterly meetings were discussed and agreed by members:

January 2024 – Finance Committee

February 2024 – Recreation Ground Committee

March 2024 – Events Committee and then the same order for the next quarters throughout the year. The Chair of each Committee to inform the clerk of the dates which and the agenda.

- iii) Christmas Lights Event -

Cllr Allchurch informed members that the event was a success, the school children were great and Lynne Howells and Father Christmas.

Cllr Stacey asked the clerk to send thank you letters to the school, Lynne Howells and Father Christmas.

f) Toolkit working group - To re-visit in January 2024

g) **New Contracts for 1 April 2024 working group** – update – ref playground and grounds maintenance contracts - Cllr Phillips/Jones

Cllr Jones informed members that Expression of Interest adverts would go out early January 2024 to the SW Guardian. The new Grounds Maintenance contract was at 1st draft stage with more input required from Council.

Discussion regarding the contract for the Playground Fortnightly checks which also need to be drafted.

Next meeting is Wednesday 10th January 2024.

The meeting Closed at 21:30.