



Rhuddlan Town Council – Minutes of the Website & Information Committee Meeting on the 4th November 2020

Virtual Meeting during the Covid 19 Restrictions

Present:

Cllr Arwel Roberts (Mayor)
Cllr Gareth Rowlands
Cllr Mike Kermode
Cllr Andrew Smith
Cllr Bleddyn Williams (late arrival)
Town Clerk
Clerical Assistant/Minute Clerk

Observers:

Cllr Syd Gaskin
Cllr Mike Elgin
Steve Wilson, Project Officer

1.Appointment of Chair

Cllr Arwel Roberts, Mayor invited propositions for Chair of the meeting. Cllr Mike Kermode proposed that Cllr Gareth Rowlands Chair the meeting, Cllr Andrew Smith seconded.
Resolved.

2. Apologies

Cllr Charlotte Frobisher

3. Declaration of Interest

None

4. Urgent Items – having been advised to the Mayor 24hrs in advance

The Mayor asked if the planning application for the holiday park at the old rugby club should be discussed this evening. Cllr Gareth Rowlands answered no and that it should be dealt with at the next Full Council meeting on November 12th. The Town Clerk confirmed that the matter was on the agenda for 12th November and that an extension to the consultation period had been granted by DCC.

5. Review of the Council's Website

Cllr Rowlands opened the discussion on the website review, by stating he was pleased with it. The work had commenced in March just before the first Covid lockdown, and has been improved over time to what we now have. He asked if any Members had comments to make.

Cllr Mike Kermode to begin the discussion, asked the Committee what they feel are the main issues. For him it was ensuring that the financial information, and Minutes are available on the website.

The Town Clerk answered that the Minutes currently go back to 2017, along with the financial information & Annual Returns as required by Audit.

Cllr Andrew Smith commented that the website looks good and it appears to work well. He felt that some residents don't find it easy to contact the Town Council and this website fills that role, and provides easy access the Minutes about decisions taken.

Cllr Arwel Roberts enquired how the Council is presenting the bilingual aspect of information. The Town Clerk said that all items are in English but only the headings of certain items are in Welsh. News items are translated by the Clerk but the bigger documents would take so much time that they are not. An external translator has assisted in the past with this and can be engaged again if Members so wish.

Cllr Mike Kermode reminded Members that the Town Council does not have a Welsh Language Policy, and therefore translation is not required.

Cllr Andrew Smith would like to see more use of Social Media by the Town Council in the future.

Cllr Gareth Rowlands then asked if any of the observers had comments on the website or video.

Cllr Mike Elgin agreed with Cllr Smith reference social media. Adding that lots of people use it now and we could just signpost them to our website to reduce the work commitment needed for social media updates & responses.

Cllr Kermode wished to make an observation that not everyone uses social media. Yes, it is a tool to inform people but not the only tool.

The Project Officer said he had used the website for his interview preparations and found it to be very good. He had seen the financial information along with the Minutes and was impressed. He suggested placing the Town Plan on the website when he gets in post, and maybe a Who's Who of the Members. In Caerwys, the Town Council, of which he is a Member, use a Facebook (FB) site called Friends of Caerwys Chronicle which refers enquiries to the Town Council website.

6. External Information Review - Video

Cllr Gareth Rowlands stated that the video was not yet live but offered to play the video on the screen for Members if they so wished or just discuss verbally as many had already seen the video.

Cllr Mike Kermode proposed that the Committee discuss the video verbally, seconded by Cllr Andrew Smith. **Resolved.**

The Town Clerk had mainly received positive comments back from Members. However, Cllr Kermode thought that it would be good to see more of the High Street businesses and less of swans and moorhens, and Cllr Gaskin more on Rhuddlan cafés.

Cllr Gareth Rowlands said that the website will only have short clips of the video, the full length would be posted elsewhere on the website and that the colours were amazing.

The Clerk added that Denbighshire CC would like to use the video for their Ambassador Scheme, and that she will forward it to the North Wales Tourism Group.

Cllr Mike Elgin thought the video was fantastic but would like to have seen something of the castle enactment event. The Clerk said that she had provided some great still photos of the event from the castle curator, but the quality was not good enough.

Cllr Arwel Roberts noted that it was difficult to include everything, and some businesses have permanently closing due to Covid which added to the difficulty. He enquired about the video being bilingual. The Town Clerk said that the captions should be and would follow up.

Cllr Andrew Smith was concerned that the castle was not focused on enough but recalled that access could not be got for any further shots.

The Town Clerk mentioned that the Town Council need to move forward with the project and suggested that Members might like to recommend the website & video to Full Council then add items once live.

Cllr Gareth Rowlands said this was a great first effort and suggested that if approved, it could be reviewed every 6 months. The video was shown.

The Project Officer thought the video looked good and it makes him want to go and see such things as the nature reserve. He agreed that adding to it in the future was a good idea.

Cllr Syd Gaskin concluded that future additions should be the church, café's, High Street, and more of the castle.

The Members agreed to recommend to Council that the website and video be approved as is, with the ability to add other items at a 6-monthly review. **Resolved.**

7. Social Media Guidelines

The Town Clerk reminded Members of a course on the use of social media some had attended in Mold. The paper in front of them for discussion came from revisiting the course and material by the Welsh Local Government Association.

Cllr Andrew Smith would like to see the Council explore the possibility of a social media page linked back to the website so the Clerk could more easily use and access it.

Cllr Arwel Roberts agreed and spoke on his experiences of using social media recently and some of the difficulties it has caused him. It is a danger, but also has advantages e.g. the Rhuddlan Food Bank and supported social media use.

The discussions at the course showed that a 2-way social media page was not always a good idea but there were benefits in having a 1-way page that could be used as a platform for external information. A 2-way page would require a lot of work. Cllr Mike Kermode also commented that people's responses from social media posts should not be seen as a "survey".

The Town Clerk explained how the previous Cllr Gareth Smith used social media a lot and became a good link for the Council in that he would post information out on our behalf.

Cllr Gareth Rowlands had real concerns that social media could easily become a “tennis match” of views and required a lot of work by someone. He agreed with the idea of a 1-way page that would be linked to the Council’s website, and suggested it needed investigating further.

Cllr Mike Kermode proposed that the Committee recommends to Full Council that we investigate a 1-way page linked to our website. Cllr Andrew Smith seconded adding that we must also investigate a way of controlling our input. **Resolved.**

Cllr Syd Gaskin as an observer tonight wondered if we need a social media page when we have a new website.

Cllr Mike Elgin another observer, had viewed the report and WLGA website adding that the information was a good example of how to use social media.

Cllr Kermode noting that the Committee had already resolved to recommend to Full Council that we investigate a 1-way page and that the report be recommended for use as the Council’s framework for the use of social media. Cllr Arwel Roberts seconded. **Resolved.**

Cllr Roberts commented that the Mayor and Deputy Mayor are the frontline face of Rhuddlan Town Council and positive news stories should be aired using social media, and asked if those present were against him using social media.

Cllr Mike Elgin said that the Council cannot censor a Councillor

Cllr Roberts responded that he didn’t mean that, he meant congratulating someone for good community work.

Cllr Bleddyn Williams was concerned that he may make personal comments about his politics and how would that work.

Cllr Gareth Rowlands said if it’s your view as Bleddyn Williams then that’s your choice. If it’s as a councillor then it has to conform to the report we are discussing. It’s there to assist all our councillors with posting on social media. He suggested that a councillor could have 2 social media accounts one for your own personal use and one for Council comments.

Cllr Mike Kermode described that Cllr Roberts posting something as Mayor if fine, or as a Councillor if fine, but if personal then follow the guidance in the report.

Cllr Mike Elgin noted that the Police Crime Commissioner has 2 social media accounts, and clearly, and openly, distinguishes between the two.

Cllr Mike Kermode proposed that a note be added to the report guidance about the use of two social media accounts as discussed above and Full Council be recommended to adopt the framework. Cllr Arwel Roberts seconded. **Resolved.**

8 Internal Information Review – Minutes

Cllr Gareth Rowlands asked the Town Clerk to introduce the item to the Committee.

The Clerk had prepared and circulated a brief report on the style and content of Minutes. The paper had been written with reference to the National Association of Local Councils and the Society of Local Council Clerks.

This was done because recent discussions in Full Council have focused a lot on the details of Minutes and become lengthy because of the detailed accuracy requested for statements made by individual Councillors.

Meetings should not last more than 1 – 2 hours, be brief but informative, factual, accurate, and relevant. The Minutes should include a clear record of resolutions made including recommendations. Although the Council had decided (May 2019) to name all members who contribute to debates, this should not be done. The Minutes are taking ages to go through and approve before signing thus wasting valuable Council time to debate other agenda items. The paper also highlighted that the following reports should be included in the Minutes – Police Matters, Mayor's Report, Town Clerk's Report, County Councillor's Report. They can be added as an Appendix.

Cllr Andrew Smith proposed that the only time a councillor needed to be named is when they bring an item forward, who makes a proposition, and who seconds it. Cllr Mike Kermode seconded.

Cllr Gareth Rowlands said that he had a long experience of being a councillor and was sure that Rhuddlan Town Council historically never used to name councillors for any reason, and that there was no politics at this level. Adding he saw no reason for names to be used at all.

Cllr Syd Gaskin queried if this was the right meeting for the discussion, and that it should be debated at Full Council.

Cllr Mike Kermode answered that this Committee will be making recommendations to Full Council for debate.

The Town Clerk added that perhaps we should word the recommendation to say that naming councillors is to be avoided wherever possible.

Cllr Andrew Smith agreed with this but still maintained that naming the proposer and seconder needs recording for transparency.

Cllr Mike Kermode then withdrew his second to the first proposal.

Cllr Smith then proposed that the paper should be recommended to Full Council after a long discussion on its merits. Cllr Arwel Roberts seconded. **Resolved.**

9 Webcast of Town Council Meetings

A paper had been circulated on why a Town Council should use webcast for meetings.

Cllr Mike Kermode opened the discussion by highlighting the advantages and disadvantages of webcast meetings. He added that the Council does not receive many members of the public for normal face to face meetings, and hardly none for our virtual meetings. He queried whether the public needed to see how decisions were made. Cllr Kermode also had concerns about the cost of the webcasting equipment, commenting that's its ok for the Senedd, Westminster, and Local Authorities who have statutory duties to perform and bigger budgets.

The Town Clerk had investigated webcasting meeting with the members of the Society for Local Council Clerks in North Wales. Out of 16 replies received only 1 uses it. Many are awaiting to see if legislation is brought in before considering it.

Cllr Mike Elgin thought that webcasting would be an opportunity for people to see what's going on without ever leaving their home. Perhaps Council could promote the idea to gauge opinion.

Cllr Gareth Rowlands noting that we only usually get 1 member of public to our Council face to face meetings, so not necessary. We have a Minute Clerk and our website to inform of what happens in Council and invitation to attend if they wish. Where would we get the funds to employ a person to operate the webcast system and cameras?

Cllr Arwel Roberts explained that DCC does webcast meetings but not many people watch it. We as a Town Council don't have large budgets.

Cllr Roberts proposed that we recommend not pursuing webcasting our meetings. Cllr Bleddyn Williams seconded. **Resolved.**

With nothing else on the agenda Cllr Gareth Rowlands thanked the new Project Officer for joining as an observer this evening, and closed the meeting

Cllr Syd Gaskin then offered birthday greeting to the Mayor Cllr Arwel Roberts.

Date of Next Meeting – Full Council Thursday 12th November at 7pm