



Rhuddlan Town Council – Minutes of the meeting on the 8th December 2022

Hybrid Meeting

Present:

Cllr Mike Elgin (Mayor)
Cllr Mike Kermode (Deputy Mayor)
Cllr Ivor Beech
Cllr Ann Davies (virtual)
Cllr Reg Davies
Cllr Arwel Roberts
Cllr Gareth Rowlands
Cllr Val Simmons
Cllr Bleddyn Williams
Cllr Rob Williams
Town Clerk
Clerical Assistant/Minute Clerk (virtual)

Members were informed that the meeting was being recorded, audio only.
There was 1 member of the public present

1. Apologies

Cllr Jackie Burnham

2. Declaration of Interest

None offered

The Clerk had drafted and circulated a change to the way the council manages its Register of Members Interests for Council discussion and approval. Members were talked through the reasons for it and its contents which involved recording all members interests raised at a meeting and updating the register monthly on the council's website. The general register of members interests produced within 30 days of an election is not required. The methodology has been checked with the legal team at One Voice Wales and is used by several other Community/Town Councils across Wales. Cllr Mike Kermode proposed approval, seconded by Cllr Mike Elgin. **Resolved.**

3. Urgent Matters

The mayor had received 1 urgent matter which he will discuss under Part 2

4. Police Matters

PCSO Phil Roberts gave his apologies for the meeting but his written report had been circulated. Temporary Sergeant Nia Williams had also sent apologies. Members had no comments to make, and the Clerk reported that PCSO Roberts had been invited to attend the Carols around the Tree event.

5. Minutes

Town Council Meeting 10th November 2022

Subject to 3 minor grammatical amendments, the Minutes were proposed as a true record by Cllr Arwel Roberts, seconded by Cllr Gareth Rowlands. **Resolved.**

The minutes were duly signed

6. Matters Arising

- a. **Police Matters** – Parking Enforcement officers had been seen patrolling Gwindy Street following parking concerns from residents.
- b. **Code of Conduct Training** – The Clerk has yet to receive a training date so asked Members to consider that if not received by the year end then the Council books a One Voice Wales course and send the invoice to DCC. Cllr Ann Davies as a County Councillor had received information that a Code of Conduct course can be done anytime during a 5 year term of election. Adding that DCC was holding a face to face course on December 20th. Members were not clear as to eligible attendees so the Clerk is to check if Town Councillors can attend. Cllr Gareth Rowlands noting the importance and mandatory nature of the course proposed that the Town Council should progress a course with One Voice Wales if no date is received from DCC by 31st December, and the cost forwarded to DCC. Seconded by Cllr Mike Kermode. **Resolved.** A Member reported their attendance at several courses already, and in response to a question the Code of Conduct course contents, venue, and convenience dates for Town Council were discussed.
- c. **Rhuddlan Castle** – The mayor has contacted Cadw regarding the repair of the second flag pole but has not yet received a satisfactory response. Members were still reporting complaints that the flags are not flying so Cllr Mike Kermode proposed that if Cadw agree, then Council should offer to financially support the repair of the second flag pole. Seconded by Cllr Gareth Rowlands. **Resolved.** Cllr Gareth Rowlands further proposed that Lord Longford be asked to support this action and be copied into any emails with the custodian. Seconded by Cllr Reg Davies. **Resolved.**
- d. **Dog Fouling Signs** – ordered awaiting delivery. The mayor had visited the resident in Links Avenue who had complained about one of the signs. He explained the issues of complaint to the Members but had noted that paradoxically a tree obscures the sign. It was also noted that the tree is overhanging the pavement and in the future will require some maintenance. A Member asked a question about the orientation of the map on the sign as it should be different at each sign location. As this has been discussed at a previous meeting and is included in previous Minutes any queries were respectfully directed there.

- e. **National Eisteddfod** – A response had been received regarding holding the eisteddfod in Rhuddlan. DCC are interested and investigating the Town Council's proposals.
- f. **Tree Debris in River** – A verbal response had been given to the Clerk that NRW monitor such debris in the river and that it is the responsibility of the land owner to remove it, but will enforcement removal if there is a risk of flooding. A written response is awaited. This brought about a lengthy debate about the response including:-
- Difficulty to remove such debris by land owner, the scale of work, and the cost
 - Concern over the NRW response
 - Members noted removal of tree debris in the past
 - Noted that NRW will remove if the flood risk is to residential properties.
 - Improved co-operation between land owner and NRW is required.
 - NRW office sited on Abergele Road may be a useful site for an enquiry about removal.

Council decided to await the written response before taking any action. **Resolved.**

- g. **First Aid Course** – Saturday 10th December 9.30am – 12.30 am
- h. **Playground Repairs** – In Admiral's Field the Fresh Air gym domes have arrived and installed. Two pieces of equipment have been installed with help from the Commuted Sums grant and a press release placed on the website. Brian Jackson metal worker been asked to quote for new access gates.
- i. **Tourism Website** – Works order issued to Web Services and kick-off meeting will be held in January.
- j. **Vulnerable people** – The Clerk informed Members that a communication has been issued by DCC locating the 'Warm Places' sites in Denbighshire.
- k. **Christmas Lights** - The switch on by the head boy & girl of Ysgol Y Castell proved to be a very successful event.
- l. **Community Centre** –A meeting has been arranged for Thursday January 5th 2023 with the Trustee's to discuss potential support opportunities.
- m. **Hwb Rhuddlan Opening** – delayed until Wi-Fi is installed, expected in January.
- n. **Tan y Bryn Defibrillator** – They have been informed that Council cannot offer a grant to an individual so the residential home is looking into this.
- o. **Christmas Best Dressed Business & House Competition** – It is hoped to judge the competition this weekend and times of judging will be decided by the volunteer judges.
- p. **World Cup Sporting Competitions** – The Welsh FA have sent a letter of thanks for Council's congratulations. The Women's Rugby Union World cup and The Men's Rugby League World Cup welsh teams not been written to yet.
- q. **MUGA Flood Lights** – In accordance with the November meeting resolution to investigate the lights being changed to LED and an auto switch off facility, a quote of £12k had been received. Another is awaited. Members were reminded that this was to save energy costs but also to be able to easier operate lights. A Member stated that Rhuddlan football team were using St Asaph all weather pitch as Admiral's Field has no floodlights and asked if floodlights could be installed to the football pitch. Another Member clarified that historical covenants on Admiral's Field prevent this

development as the Field was given as a gift for community recreation use in general. Whilst the field is marked out for playing football the development to create a more formal football ground with floodlights would not be acceptable. It has been investigated previously refused for the same reason.

- r. **Hwb Rhuddlan Use** – A lengthy but useful exchange of legitimate questions, debate, confirmation of processes used, and the actual costs confirmed took place. A precis follows.

The Dragons FC had originally asked the Town Council to assist them to provide changing facilities and toilets for their young members. This has been debated by the Council a decision made to provide a multi-use community facility that can be used by many groups including the football club rather than being football club specific.

Members heard that the Council previously agreed to purchase the Hwb building with a public sector loan of £120,000 and the terms of the loan meant the building had to be a multi-use community building. A recent meeting with the Dragons Football Club confirmed they did not want to use the building for changing rooms but use it for shelter and refreshments.

A member questioned what consultation had taken place with residents regarding the need and use of the building prior to purchase. In reply it was clarified that this had taken place with all other due process required to make the purchase of the buildings and that this can be seen in previous minutes. Another Member commented that there is definite need for this type of multi-use community facility and the views expressed by Cllrs and the public for public toilets on the field led to RTC making a positive decision to provide a community facility available to all. A newly elected Member was happy to hear the explanation as they had not been a councillor when the original decisions were made and now understood the rationale.

Some Members were concerned that local comment believed that the project had cost £500k but it was stated actual costs to date are approximately £180k as the Council have project managed the project.

The mayor kindly asked Members to now move on to other agenda items after the very useful discussions above which he hoped had cleared up many members concerns. No more comments were made and the meeting moved on.

- s. **Kings letter** – The Clerk had placed a copy of the Kings letter, reference the death of his mother Queens Elizabeth II, on the community noticeboard.

At this stage of the meeting Cllr Ann Davies made a comment that she had concerns about the mayor stopping her from speaking when other Members were allowed more time to speak and added that this could seen as sex discrimination. She asked this to be included in the Minutes. The mayor immediately responded by refuting the allegation made by Cllr Davies and commented that she was repeating her previous comments and that the issue had now been discussed in detail therefore was merely wanting to move the meeting on to the next agenda item given the lengthy debate on these issues and the time allocated to Council meetings.

7. Correspondence from:

a. The mayor

The mayor's report had been circulated.

- The mayor was pleased to see the Remembrance Day activities go smoothly and thanked all those who had participated and given up their free time to make it so successful.
- A new community radio station had invited the mayor to meet them called Sound Radio, and he was impressed with the standard of the studio. There is a potential use by the Town Council for our future projects and events, suggesting that the Clerk and any other councillors might like to go and look at it.
- Several other items in his report were mentioned briefly e.g. the successful Christmas lights switch on, the mayor thanked all who helped organise it, and the litter pick success.
- The Deputy mayor was then invited to inform Members of a Welsh Government Diversity in Democracy conference and webinar Pension Credit meetings he had attended. Given the shortage of time Cllr Kermode would provide a written note for discussion at our January meeting.

The report was accepted.

b. The Town Clerk & Town Plan update.

The Clerk had circulated his report in advance.

Elements of the report were discussed - in particular:-

- Delay in completion of the external audit until end of January 2023.
- 2023/2024 sum for the purposes of Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 is to be £30,207.
- The Rhuddlan Friendship Group is to be asked to make their funding application via the Council's application process please.
- Rhuddlan Community Group asking Council to replace the two planters owned by the Council outside the chemist shop with eco-recycled plastic planters at a cost of £900 +vat. Cllr Gareth Rowlands proposed that wooden planters be provided from Meifod wood products. Seconded by Cllr Arwel Roberts. Cllr Mike Kermode proposed an amendment that recycled plastic planters would be a better option in his opinion, seconded by Cllr Ann Davies, **Resolved.**
- Complaint from a resident regarding the siting of the Hwb storage container. The Clerk had confirmed to the complainant the planning process has been followed.
- Complaint from a resident regarding the untidy appearance of the town which has been highlighted to our two county councillors and escalated to DCC.
- The Clerk asked Members if they wished to consider a discounted rate to stall holders who book for all 10 community markets during 2023. He suggested a 25% discount. Cllr Mike Kermode proposed, seconded by Cllr Gareth Rowlands. **Resolved.**

- The Active Travel Plan open public meeting has been scheduled for January by Sustrans.
- Hwb progress was discussed, in particular the surface water drainage issues are having to be reinvestigated by the specialist contract as the underground investigations have proved the original solution is not feasible. There is a meeting arranged for Monday of the Council's Working Group. There is to be a rethinking of the toilet seat colour to ensure it is dementia friendly. **The report and project update were accepted**

8 County Councillor Reports

a. Cllr Ann Davies provided a verbal report

Scottish Power are working at Pentre Lane on low voltage reinforcement.

DCC have informed Cllr Davies that an alternative cemetery drainage solution idea is near completion for sharing. Cllr Mike Kermode acknowledged a good job done by Cllr Davies in following up this issue but voiced concerns that DCC had not informed Rhuddlan Town Council directly, and asked Cllr Davies to share the details of the solution. Cllr Davies confirmed she would, adding that the solution did not come from DCC but Gareth Davies MS.

There is to be some investment in the flooding issue on New Road.

Warning that DCC are experiencing trouble with their CRM (Customer Service) system. DCC housing stock experiencing damp & mould problems but they are good at dealing with this type of issue.

The Talking Point service that DCC provides at the library offers some useful information and support which Cllr Davies explained briefly. Thursdays 2-4pm

DCC budget discussions have started for 2023/4 and more cuts in services are being reviewed, Cllr Davies wants to ensure library budgets are not affected.

The report was accepted

b. Cllr Arwel Roberts had circulated a written report

Cllr Roberts will be organising a raffle at the community market (Dec 17th) and would be grateful for any assistance from Members.

Ysgol Y Castell draft Estyn Report is a pleasurable read and should be made public soon. He asked that the Minutes record the Council's congratulations to the staff and acting Head Teacher for their work and dedication. The school have requested a small site on Admiral's Field if possible to progress their Woodland Skills training recently undertaken.

Cllr Roberts is currently Chair of DCC and his report included details of aspects of this role. The Civic Sunday event was mentioned and he offered his thanks to those who had attended.

The report was accepted

9. Events Committee Minutes of December 5th 2022

Cllr Mike Kermode as Chair of this committee was asked to present the Minutes.

He informed Members that a public meeting is to be held on January 24th 2023 to gauge ideas from Rhuddlan community groups and residents for the Kings Coronation

celebration and what support would be required from the Council. Posters are going out soon to advertise this meeting and will be posted on the website and social media. All Members are invited to attend.

He highlighted the carols around the Christmas tree event taking place on December 18th with the set up will commence 3pm for an event start time of 4.30pm. A reminder was given that this is at the community centre and replaces what had been previously organised outside the Chinese restaurant, adding his expectation that this will become a regular event. The proceeds of the donation bucket collection will be given to the community centre.

Cllr Kermode thanked the Members who had already volunteered to help and asked for more volunteers to help if they could. The Clerk had received offers of volunteers from the Spar shop, and community centre.

Thanks were given to the Spar and Community Centre for their support with this event.

10. Biodiversity Statement & Plan.

The Clerk had drafted a statement and plan for Members to review and agree. Guidelines from One Voice Wales and other community/parish/town councils were used to inform the statement, and a list of what could be considered as already completed actions for inclusion in the plan were highlighted. Suggested actions and timelines were discussed by Members.

Cllr Arwel Roberts proposed that the statement and plan be adopted and a sub-committee be established. Seconded by Cllr Bleddyn Williams. **Resolved.**

11. Menter Iaith 2023 Activities

Cllr Arwel Roberts declared an interest and decided not speak on the issues.

Menter Iaith have sent a suggested list of some activities that they could facilitate in Rhuddlan if the Council would support them financially. The mayor took Members through the suggestions and they were discussed noting the current decline in the use of the Welsh language, and that some activities are already being done. A Member wondered if more could be offered and Council was amenable to this if Menter Iaith wanted to come back with more suggestions. It was also noted that Welsh speaking children after attending Welsh language schools in the area sometimes don't use their language skills and Members commented that getting more jobs into Wales would help this scenario.

Cllr Gareth Rowlands proposed that all 6 suggested activities were supported by means of £1650 as listed. Seconded by Cllr Mike Kermode. **Resolved.**

12. Planning

i) 44/2022/1021 – Stapletons, Princes Road - Installation of external insulation & replacement of UPVC windows.

No objections

ii) 44/2021/1023 – Former Rhuddlan Foundry, Station Rd. – Change of use of from general industrial, to open storage and distribution.

This application was previously objected to by the Council in 2021 on the grounds of it creating a visually detrimental appearance to Rhuddlan's historical gateway being so close to the church and castle. It is accompanied by a long list of documentation including flood containment, and a view from CADW that they had no objection providing trees were planted on the north side of the site.

The discussion centred on the exact location of the site, tree planting to mask any visual detrimental issues, assisting our biodiversity plan, and DCC Countryside Services work. Cllr Ann Davies proposed that the previous objection made by Town Council be repeated. Should planning be granted then a condition be made that fast growing trees be planted before any development begins to mask its visual detrimental appearance.

The decision was to object due to visual detrimental appearance to Rhuddlan's historical gateway. Note condition if planning is granted.

13. Budget & Finance

a. Grant Applications

i) Denbighshire Urdd Eisteddfod for the unspecified running costs of the regions work which were highlighted for Members discussion. There was much support for the work of the Urdd in Denbighshire and a wish to donate with several amounts suggested. Cllr Arwel Roberts proposed that Council write in support of the request in principle, but a specified figure, and its use needs to be provided. Seconded by Cllr Gareth Rowlands.

Resolved.

During the discussion it was noted that the Council usually require completion of the Council's grant application form and not general round robin applications. But agreed that if the application was from a national governing body they were acceptable.

ii) Welsh Air Ambulance Charity had circulated a video on their proposed changes for their future operations by email for Members attention. The Members acknowledged the importance of the service and were in support in principle of making a donation. After a short debate Cllr Ann Davies proposed that £500 be donated, seconded by Cllr Arwel Roberts. **Resolved.**

It was agreed to post this donation on the Council's website to recognise the subject and donation.

- b. Payments List – The Clerk reminded Members of the Rhuddlan Bowls Club grant situation whereby Cadwyn Clwyd had refused the payment on the grounds of the work commencing before the grant announcement. He explained how the situation had arisen and sought their approval for payment without grant clawback.

Cllrs Mike Elgin and Arwel Roberts declared an interest and left the meeting for a short while. The Deputy mayor took the Chair of the meeting for this item.

Members were keen to support the club and debated the need to honour the match funding grant offered by the Council, and the reasons for the early start of the planting project. Cllr Gareth Rowlands proposed payment of the originally agreed match funding of £391.54 along with the remaining payment items on the list, seconded by Cllr Mike Kermode. **Resolved.**

Cllrs Elgin and Roberts returned to the meeting and the mayor to the Chair.

A short discussion then took place about the Vicarage Lane playing field hedge an element of which is already in the budget for this year but now needs an extension of work. This extension of work to be advised by DCC Countryside Services Jim Kilpatrick. It is the hedge behind the surgery and library. Cllr Mike Kermode proposed that DCC be asked to advise on the works now required, seconded by Cllr Arwel Roberts.

Resolved.

- c. The Clerk reminded Members that ideas for next year's projects are required for the setting of the budget and precept so that they can be listed and debated at the January Precept meeting. He then proceeded to list those projects already known or suggested. This included the MUGA lights, Admiral's Field circulatory path and new playground access gates, library financial support, planters on the High Street, Hwb Rhuddlan rates, potential support for the Kings Coronation event, match funding for commuted sums opportunities, and potential biodiversity projects.

14. Community Matters

- a. Cllr Arwel Roberts informed Members of the Rhuddlan scout leaders sterling long service of 40 years and to mark the service a presentation is to be made at the January meeting.

- b. Cllr Val Simmons had received a compliment regarding the town's new Christmas lights from the mayor of Rhyl.

Cllr Simmons also informed the meeting that a lot of broken glass had been reported to DCC and had been cleared very quickly.

- c. The subject of a vulnerable person who is being cared for in Rhuddlan by DCC social services was discussed in a sympathetic and diplomatic manner. The Council acknowledge that this person has been risk assessed and is considered as being safe and harmless by the professional service providers, but there remain some people who complain to town councillors about being frightened by his actions. Members recognised the person's rights and were sympathetic to resident's comments that somehow need to be passed on to his carers, but struggled with how to deal with the dilemma it posed. It was agreed and proposed by Cllr Gareth Rowlands that Nicola Stubbing's be written to as a reminder of residents' fears. Seconded by Cllr Val Simmons. **Resolved.**

Cllr Ann Davies abstained from the vote.

- d. Cllr Ann Davies had also received compliments regarding the new Christmas lights in the town and requests to extend the coverage next year to other areas of the town e.g. Tirionfa.

Part 2 Exclusion of the Press & Public

By virtue of The Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the press & public are excluded from discussions on the following items on the basis that disclosure thereof would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

The recording of the meeting was switched off and the member of the public present left the meeting.

15. Urgent Matter - Wild Meadow Concerns

An incident occurred recently at the Nant Close wild meadow site whereby DCC operatives had been confronted by local residents whilst carrying out their duties. This led to them leaving the site without completing those duties. Members were concerned at this latest escalation of complaint by residents and did not condone it any way.

The mayor reminded Members of the actions taken so far by town council with DCC on this subject, highlighting the response that the offer of putting forward a more suitable site for wild meadow cultivation was refused,

This brought about a lengthy debate on the worrying turn of events, the site unsuitability, and the reluctance of DCC to work with town council on an alternative site. Town council recognised that this was an issue for DCC but requiring Members to put forward their constituents concerns as elected to do. Cllr Mike Kermode proposed that the Chief Executive Officer be written to repeating the offer of working with DCC on an alternative site and removing the Nant Close site from the wild meadow project. The letter to be copied to the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member with responsibility for the wild meadow project. Seconded by Cllr Mike Elgin. **Resolved.**

16. Date of next meeting – 12/01/2023 Full Council Hybrid Meeting 7pm

Signed.....Cllr Mike Elgin (Mayor)