

Minutes of a Hybrid Meeting by Usk Town Council (UTC) held in Sessions House on Monday 11th March 2024 at 6.00pm

Present, Cllr M. Howells, Cllr G Roderick, Cllr A. Ivin, Cllr. D Harrison, Cllr B Thomas, Cllr K. Peacock, County Cllr Tony Kear, RFO Diane Richards, Town Clerk Mrs T Huxley

Prior to the meeting at 5:30pm, Police Inspector Emma Sowrey discussed community concerns raised by Full Council. Matters included were:

- Reports of nuisance caused by neighbours in the Sunnyside area
- Issues related to parking near the school on Monmouth Road
- Concerns regarding parking near the One-Stop retail shop on Maryport Street
- Incidents of pavement parking on Four Ash Street
- HGVs passing through town.

17.9 To accept apologies for absence.

Cllr Steve O'Brien

20.0 Public Open Forum

(15 minutes at the discretion of the Mayor.) Members of the public are invited to address the Council in relation to items on the agenda. A member of the public shall not speak for more than 5 minutes unless directed by the Chair. A question shall not require a response at the meeting nor start a debate on the question. The Chair may direct that a written or oral response be given.

- A member of the public inquired about the decision-making process regarding their admission to the finance meeting.
Response from UTC - There was a misunderstanding of the rules, leading to the Clerk consulting the Standing Orders before admitting the member of the public.
- A meeting attendee questioned the reasoning behind the decision to invest in professional advice for staff payroll and VAT, considering the availability of guidance from One Voice Wales, an organization dedicated to advising councils.
Response from UTC - The cost of the VAT advice will be covered by MCC, and the staff payroll check will be provided at no charge.

20.1 To disclose personal and pecuniary interest in items of business listed below

Item 21.8 Usk Athletic Club - Path Order Application – Cllrs Peacock & Thomas

Item 22.1 Matters of Information - installation of outdoor table tennis by Usk Scouts - Cllr Ivin

20.2 County Councillors participation - Meirion Howells (MH), Tony Kear (TK)

- Green Infrastructure enhancement schemes – MH reported four areas have been identified in Usk - the committee will report back to UTC
- Ash dieback tree removal works are currently being carried out by MCC.
- MCC has been notified of 10 potholes that require attention.
- Installation of 20mph signs near Usk Athletic Club has been completed.
- Resurfacing work has been completed on the approach to the A449.

- The bus service in Usk has undergone a retendering process, resulting in an hourly No 60 bus, a Sunday service, and an improved service between Nos 60 & 68 starting April 1st.
- The bus stop sign at Burrium Gate has still not been reinstalled.
- Speed watch - there has been revised risk assessments in light of the new 20mph legislation. The group look to undertake more reviews
- MCC now has the capability to download data from SIDS, although it is not yet accessible.
- There is a lack of activity in maintaining drains to prevent flooding
- As a Ward Member TK expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of publicity surrounding low-cost home ownership opportunities in Usk
- MCC will conduct a review of road conditions and repairs, implementing a new grading system to prioritize roads for maintenance
- Following complaints about portions and waste, the Head Teacher is conducting a survey on school meals.

Cllr Harrison left the meeting

20.3 To approve the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on 12th February 2024

The Minutes were approved as a true and accurate record, with the exception of Item 18.6 the monthly Finance report for January 2024. It was clarified that during the meeting, Cllr Ivin reported that the RFO had presented the following information to the finance committee:

- The bank reconciliation for January showed no erroneous receipts
- No payments were made outside the normal monthly running costs or not previously agreed

County Cllr Kear joined the meeting

20.4 Matters arising from the Minutes of the meeting held 12th February 2024

Item 19.8 Cllr Ivin will liaise with The Grange regarding access to Little Explorers Nursery

20.5 To receive a report from the Sessions House Management Committee

See report dated 6th March

20.6 To receive the monthly Finance report for February 2024

See report dated 6th March 2024

The bank reconciliation for January showed no erroneous receipts.

No payments were made outside the normal monthly running costs or not previously agreed.

The following payments were agreed:

- £1300 for the scaffolding necessary for the repair of the Town Clock
- £850+VAT to Volute Architects for the preparation of a report required for the application to CADW for a building maintenance grant for Sessions House maintenance..

Renewal of UTC/Sessions House Insurance

Resolved: Cllr Ivin had contacted Insurance Brokers Thomas Carroll for a competitive quotation but has not received a reply. Therefore, it was agreed by Full Council to proceed in accepting Zurich's quotation for a fixed price 3-year policy at £3,865 per year.

Ongoing VAT issues - Cllr Ivin to meet with Centurion for VAT Guidance. Cllr Ivin has requested staff submit pay slips from November 2023 to 2024 for the purpose of engaging an independent payroll company.

20.7 To receive an update from the Welsh Audit Office

Correspondence has been received from the Audit Office requiring additional information for the Audit

Resolved: The RFO and Clerk are responding to this.

20.8 To consider MCC's countywide forthcoming parking review

During the summer, MCC will conduct a review. TK reported that UBSEG had discussed parking and the majority were in favour of 2 hours free parking.

Resolved: Cllr Howells will work on creating a survey for residents. Additionally, it was noted that the Memorial Hall committee has formally requested designated parking bays from MCC for Memorial Hall users. This request will be included in the countywide review.

20.9 To receive the following Planning Applications

a) DM/2022/00736

Little Bank 8 Porthycarne Street Usk Monmouthshire NP15 1RY Air Source Heat Pump, installation of a window to the northwest and a sky light

Recommend Approval- subject to the heat pump complying with regulations

21.0 To receive an update on the Masterplan for Usk

There had been a positive meeting last week. Still waiting for

- Work to be completed regarding the buses
- More detailed work on Bridge Street.

Resolved: UTC need to meet and give feedback on the plans from Roberts Limerick.

Steering Group scheduled to meet 13th March

21.2 To receive a report from the Groups/Organizations within the Town

- Twinning trip to Graben – Neudorf 30th April – 3rd May 2024. It was confirmed the arrangements are in place for the visit.
- Save the River Usk – will hold a festival on the 1st June 2024
- Usk Civic Society – to celebrate an Alfred Russel Wallace Day – 5th July 2024
- Together for the Climate -will be hosting a climate café in the Usk Hub, every Thurs 12-2pm.

21.3 To receive an update on use of the former Usk Household Recycling Centre (UHRC)

Confirmation received from Nick Keyse MCC, that credit will be given for the Licence Fee paid by UTC for the period when no licence was fee due.

Use of the area needs to be discussed, UBSEG /No 49 have suggested a possible self-funding commercial recycling centre

Resolved: UTC to meet and discuss how best the UHRC can be utilised.

21.4 To receive a report from the Events Committee

See Events report dated 28th February 2024

- The recent Choral Festival had been very successful

- Mayor's Tea Dance continues on 2nd Sunday of every month at Memorial Hall £5 entry with tea & cake.
- Green Top Markets will host markets in Twyn Square on 30th March

Resolved: UTC has allocated the Usk Participatory fund to a number of local organisations.

UTC Events committee is considering a summer event – Usk Young Farmers have been approached to see if they may be interested

Christmas Festival – UTC still waiting to see what involvement (UBSEG) propose.

Cllr Harrison rejoined the meeting at this point

21.5 To discuss the future of the Town Clock

TK made UTC aware of the Community Ownership Fund. This fund helps community groups buy or renovate assets that would otherwise be lost to the community.

Resolved: TK will discuss with Craig O'Connor, MCC to gain clarity on the process and associated costs involved in acquiring the clock as an asset.

21.6 To discuss concerns raised by a resident regarding crossing the road at the Porthycarne St, Bridge St, Maryport St junction

The matters was discussed.

Resolved: Concerns raised by the resident, will be addressed within the context of the new development proposals. The consultants will incorporate these concerns into the consultation plans.

21.7 To discuss concerns about the dangerous parking in Four Ash Street

This matter had been raised with Inspector Sowrey prior to the meeting.

Lines and signs are being considered for this area but will be included in the 2024-25 budget.

Resolved: MH will ask residents about displaying 'no parking signs' on their premises to discourage parking.

21.8 To receive an update on the Usk Athletic Club - Path Order Application

It was noted by members that following consultation with UTC in Sept 2023, was an objection raised concerning the path order application. The Rights of Way Officer has since been in communication with the Athletic Club to address the objection raised.

21.9 To approve the Minutes taken in Committee on the 12th February 2024

The Minutes were approved as a true and accurate record

Exclusion of Press and Public

By virtue of The Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the press and public are excluded from discussions on the items listed 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.

Council went into committee to discuss item 22.0

22.0 To discuss Usk Town Council's Annual Community Awards 2024

Following discussion Council came out of Committee and returned to the main meeting

22.1 Matters of Information

To receive information regarding the installation of an Outdoor table tennis table on the Owain Glyndwr field by Usk Scouts

Scouts have raised money for an outdoor tennis table. MCC has agreed it's installation and will officially record/draft a proper "hire/transfer" document.

19.8 Correspondence

From: Cllr O'Brien – notice of formal resignation from Usk Town Council

There was no further business and the meeting ended at 7.30pm