

Minutes of a meeting of Usk Town Council
held remotely on Zoom on Monday 12th April 2021 at 6pm

Prior to the meeting there was a minute's silence in memory of HRH Prince Philip, The Duke of Edinburgh, 1920-2021.

Present

Cllr C. Wilkinson, Cllr A. Watkins, Cllr A. Leathwood, Cllr Roderick, Cllr M Howells, Cllr Galletley, Cllr H Graz, Cllr P. McGowan, Cllr A Ivin, Cllr M. Evans, Cllr S Williams, RFO Mrs. D. Richards, Town Clerk Mrs. T Huxley

22.1 To accept apologies for absence.

C. Cllr Strong

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

- Item 22.7 a) Cllr Tony Watkins disclosed an interest in Planning Application DM/2021/00070.
- Item 23.5 Cllr Galletley declared an interest in the discussion of UTC's participation in the Usk Agricultural Show 2021

22.3 To approve the Minutes held on 8th March 2021.

The Minutes were approved as a true record and duly signed.

22.4 Matters arising from the minutes of the meeting held 8th March 2021.

There were none.

22.5 To receive a report from the Sessions House Management Committee

See report dated 8th April 2021.

22.6 To receive the monthly finance report for March 2021.

The reconciliation for March 2021 showed no erroneous receipts or payments.

The cost Centre Report was presented to Full Council.

Cllrs accepted the appointment of Mr. John Evans as the Internal Auditor

Following correspondence from the Welsh Audit Office (WAO)

- UTC is in receipt of a copy of the 2021 Annual Return for completion and return the WAO.
- The Auditor General has appointed Monday 20 September 2021 as the date from which electors can exercise their rights under the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004.
- Due to problems caused by the pandemic and to help councils in general to get up to date, the WAO has decided to defer the introduction of the new arrangements for one year. The new arrangements will therefore apply for the audit of the 2021-22 accounts.

22.7 To receive the following Planning Applications.

- a) **DM/2021/00070 Harleys Hog roast Rear Of 37A Bridge Street, Usk NP15 1B
Construction of a first-floor apartment, including 1 1/2 storeyside extension in place of existing single storey extension. Recommend Refusal**

- b) **DM/2021/00329 LBC - To replace three single glazed sash windows with near identical but double-glazed sash windows** The Old Bank House 6 Porthycarne Street Usk Monmouthshire NP15 1RY **Recommend Approval.**
- c) **DM/2021/00401** 11 Trelawny Close, Usk NP15 1SP **Residential Extension** **Recommend Approval**
- d) **DM/2021/00517 Community digital noticeboard.** Co-op Store 51 Bridge Street Usk Monmouthshire NP15 1BQ **Recommend Approval.**

22.8 Areas of concern around the Town

❖ **Railway Tunnel**

Last year the tunnel was deemed unsafe and therefore, closed. The owner of the tunnel is unknown, but apparently from 20m in at the west end, to 50m in at the east end, it belongs to British Rail and fences have been erected inside the tunnel, but not at the ends.

The question has been raised as to whether there is a point of having the rail track path at all, if it is just going to be a dead end, and whether any more work can be done on it.

It has also been noted that one of the little bridges along the path has collapsed, and the handrail at the bottom of the steps has fallen down.

According to the MCC definitive rights of way map, there is no path through the tunnel, or even across the bridge that leads to Usk Island.

Resolved:

- It was established MCC Highways own the land up to the tunnel and the entrance.
- Any structural maintenance costs will be in direct competition with other bridges in the county.
- UTC wishes the tunnel to remain open.
- Cllr Ivin will investigate matters relating to the tunnel and report back to Full Council.

❖ **Usk Royal British Legion (URBL)**

There is a broken tree branch outside the URBL, also scaffolding has been erected with a view to repairing the roof.

Resolved:

- The Clerk has contacted Highways regarding the tree, and they will take down the branch.
- There has been a delay on repairing the roof, it is hoped the work will be completed soon.

❖ **Conigar Walk**

The path on the Conigar Walk near the bridge was originally above the level of the grass, however, over the years and following recent flooding it has sunk and never clears of the build-up of silt and mud. This makes it difficult to walk through particularly so, after rainfall. The path needs to be raised.

Resolved: Clerk to contact MCC with a request

❖ **Girlguiding Garden on Maryport St.**

A Western Power pick-up truck is parking on the pavement adjacent to the electrical sub-station. This is unsightly and deemed unsafe as the children's "bug hotel" is behind the parked vehicle. The weight of the parked vehicle is also damaging the sleepers.

Resolved: Usk in Bloom & UTC have been in contact with MCC enforcement and will follow up with Western Power

22.9 To receive an update on the Masterplan for Usk - Digital Noticeboard

The following was reported.

- The noticeboard has been ordered.
- Welsh Government money has been received.
- UTC has applied for planning permission.
- UTC is due to meet MCC lighting engineer this week.
- Cllr Williams reported, in the light of the digital noticeboard, Usk has the potential to become a SMART Town.
- Cllr Williams will circulate the details to members and form a working group, with a bid to move this proposal forward.

23.0 To receive an update on the proposed markets on the site of the former Usk Household Recycling Centre (UHRC)

Resolved: UTC waiting on a meeting date with Cllr Jane Pratt and other MCC officers to discuss the future of the amenity site

23.1 To receive an update on

a) Memorial Hall car park - there is no update, however, Cllr McGowan has observed motorists are parking next to the entrance of the car park, this results in motorists being unable to see oncoming traffic when exiting the car park

Resolved: Clerk to contact MCC to ask double yellow lines be applied around the entrance to the car park

b) Monmouthshire Councils Review of Parking in Usk – No update

23.2 To receive an update on the traffic light system in Bridge Street, Usk

There have been several enquiries regarding how long the traffic lights will remain in situ.

Resolved: The Usk Business Network will seek the opinion (via a questionnaire) of residents and businesses in Bridge Street on the traffic lights

Sprokwobbles

Cllr Williams reported he has been in talks with MCC about repositioning the barriers outside Sprokwobbles to help facilitate business - waiting for confirmation from MCC.

Air Pollution

Concerns have been raised regarding the increase in exhaust fumes with the easing of Covid restrictions and increase of traffic through Usk.

Resolved:

- MCC is currently monitoring nitrogen dioxide using diffusion tubes.

- MCC has a scheduled Air Quality meeting on 6th May. UTC will be interested to discover what the current readings are and report back.

23.3 To discuss the use of “noise cameras” and the proposal of Usk becoming a “20mph Area.”

There are concerns about the number of noisy motor bikes passing through Bridge Street. It is understood some motor bikes have altered their silencers, as a result they make more noise.

Resolved: Clerk to contact MCC to enquire whether they will site ‘noise cameras’ to try and alleviate the problem.

23.4 To discuss recent Council Tax charges in Usk.

Members discussed the Council Tax Charges for Usk and talked about how the precept could possibly be reduced.

Resolved:

- It was decided it would not be prudent to reduce the precept as this would lead to a cut back in local services provided by UTC.
- Cllr McGowan will discuss with County Cllr Strong reasons why the council tax is higher in Usk than other areas in the county and ask he takes this forward to MCC and report back.

23.5 To discuss UTC’s participation in the Usk Agricultural Show 2021

Cllr Galletley declared an interest in this matter.

Resolved: UTC will sponsor the classes within the Usk Show, but will not, due the uncertainty of Covid 19 take a trade stand this year

23.6 To discuss an “avenue of trees” in Old Market Street

Resolved: Following discussion it was deemed not practical to reinstate the trees. MCC removed them previously because of complaints from residents they were blocking the light.

23.7 To receive a report from the Mon CC Dog Action Fouling Group

The recent meeting had been positive with new ideas shared within the group.

a) Dog fouling Action Day on 22nd April 2021

Resolved: Cllrs Howells, Williams, McGowan, Leathwood, Roderick will meet to plan the Dog Fouling Action Day on 22nd April

b) Request from Usk Rotary for a Dog bin near to the proposed arboretum on the Borstal field

The proposed arboretum is a joint initiative with Usk Rotary, Usk Athletic Club & the Roger Edwards Educational Trust.

Resolved: UTC will purchase the dog waste bin, however, there are concerns as to who will empty the bin, as access is difficult. Cllr Watkins informed UTC arrangements would be made to empty the bin.

23.8 To discuss the addition of Welsh language to Usk Town Council website

Cllr Howells reported there is funding available to include the Welsh Language on UTC website.

Resolved:

- UTC to enquire how much funding is available.

- Contact Vision ICT to enquire about costs to the website.
- UTC to adopt a Welsh Language policy

23.9 To accept proposals for nominations for Chair of UTC 2021/2022

Cllr Wilkinson proposed Cllr Roderick as Mayor Elect 2021/2022, this was seconded by Cllr Galletley.

Resolved: All Cllrs were in favour of this proposal.

24.0 To accept proposals for nominations for Deputy Chairman 2021/2022

- ❖ Cllr Leathwood proposed Cllr Steve Williams as Deputy Mayor Elect, this was seconded by Cllr Galletley.
- ❖ Cllr Ivin proposed Cllr Howells as Deputy Mayor Elect, this was seconded by Cllr McGowan.

Resolved: Following a vote Cllr Steve Williams was duly elected as Deputy Mayor Elect for 2021/2022

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 24.1 a) & 24.1 b)

24.1 To receive an update on

a) The Whitehouse, Old Market Street, Usk

b) The Priory Gatehouse

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

24.2 To inform members of Welsh Government's intention to launch an integrated communications campaign targeting young people aged 16-17 and foreign nationals living in Wales, who will be able to vote in the Senedd elections.

Resolved: This was noted by members. Clerk to promote on social media and UTC website.

24.3 Correspondence

From: Gwent Police acknowledgment letter

From: Acknowledgment letter from Drs. Jarrett

24.4 Any Other Business

For information

- Usk Community Policing Team will be holding surgeries once a month between April & August at the Usk Community Hub
- The Town Clock needs maintenance and painting – to be discussed further.

There was no further business and the meeting closed at 8.15pm