

**Minutes of a Hybrid Annual Meeting held in Sessions House
via Zoom conferencing on Monday 15th May 2023 at 6.00pm**

Present Cllr. M Howells, Cllr A Ivin, Cllr Steve O'Brien, Cllr G Roderick, Cllr K Peacock,
Cllr D Harrison, County Cllr Tony Kear
R.F.O Mrs. D. Richards,

1.1 Chair's Announcements

a) To receive apologies for absence

Town Clerk Mrs. T. Huxley

1.2 Election of Mayor for 2023/24

Resolved: Cllr Steve O'Brien was elected as Chairman for 2023/2024

a) Mayor to sign DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE

Resolved: Due to the absence of the Clerk the signing of the Declaration of Acceptance of Office as Town Mayor will be undertaken at the Full Council Meeting in June.

1.3 Election of Deputy Mayor 2022/23

Resolved: Cllr Alison Ivin was elected as Deputy Chairman 2023/2024

1.4 To receive declarations of interest in items on the agenda.

There were none.

1.5 Retiring Chairman's report by Cllr Meirion Howells

"Firstly, I have to start by saying what a great honour it has been to serve as the Mayor of Usk. The year has passed extremely quickly and Sarah and I have enjoyed attending many community events. In May, we had our Local Elections where we saw three new councillors elected - Kay Peacock, Steve O'Brien and Dave Harrison, all of whom have been a welcome addition to the Town Council. Although the Town Council has been reduced from 12 to 7 councillors, the support I have received from my fellow councillors and our amazing staff has been invaluable. My grateful thanks to the outgoing Mayor Cllr Glenn Roderick and a special thank you to our retiring councillors - Christine Wilkinson, Alec Leathwood, Tony Watkins, Roger Galletley, Heather Graz and Steve Williams; between them they have served our town with over 100 years of service. The election also saw two new County Councillors for the Llanbadoc & Usk Ward elected - Cllr Tony Kear and myself.

We are currently working with MCC and Llanbadoc CC to move forward our vision for the Usk and Woodside Improvement Plan. We have also secured £50,000 Welsh Government funding for the design work for Twyn Square and Bridge St and look forward to sharing these with you when they are complete.

Together with MCC, Maryport St South Car Park has been resurfaced, complete with sustainable drainage system to lower our impact on flooding and a low energy lighting system installed, that dims to 20% brightness unless activated, thus lowering our light pollution on surrounding wildlife and planted flowers and shrubs in the sustainable rain garden.

Our thanks to the Panto Players for purchasing a new defibrillator in Burrium Gate furthering our existing defib cover for residents, bringing our total defibs in Usk to eight. We have also installed a new Digital Information Board near the Co-op, which was secured through Welsh Government funding and has proved to be a great asset for promoting events and for business advertising.

We continue to support the 'Save The River Usk' campaign and also the 'Together For The Climate' group to ensure our town becomes more sustainable. Unfortunately, the Jubilee Outdoor Market in the old recycling centre was not as successful as we had hoped as the operator found it difficult to make the market viable. However, we are looking at some exciting ideas to re-develop this area.

One of the many benefits of being the Mayor and Mayoress of Usk is that it allows us to fundraise for charities of our choice. My wife and I chose Parkinson's Monmouthshire, MIND Monmouthshire, St David's Hospice Care and Alzheimer's Groups (Sing for the Brain Monmouth, Sing for the Brain Abergavenny, Music and Memories Raglan and Dancetime4All, Bridges Centre). These charities were chosen by my wife and I because they are very close to our hearts and feel that they touch the lives of so many of us living here in Usk. Through residents and businesses, we have fundraised £10,560 and we are grateful for your generosity.

With the pandemic almost behind us, we were allowed to have unrestricted events. I am immensely grateful to everyone that has contributed to organising these events and I must extend a special thank you to my wife, Sarah, and my children Freddie, Katie & Dilwyn for all the support they have given me. I would also like to extend my thanks to my mother for occasionally standing in as my Consort and Tracey, Diane, Lyn & Richard who have always been there to offer a helping hand when needed. A special thank you must also go out to the Worsley and Harrison families who have stepped in to help whenever needed!

The year has certainly been a busy one! The start of summer was marked by our late Queen's Platinum Jubilee, which we celebrated with a wonderful Lantern Parade and Community Picnic with live music in The Owain Glyndwr Park. We enjoyed beautiful weather for the Usk Civic Service at The Priory Church of St Mary, with a wonderful reception afterwards here at the Sessions' House. I also had the pleasure of attending numerous events in my mayoral capacity including the Athletic Club Annual Duck Race, the Usk Primary School Summer Fayre the Chordis Caerllion Youth Orchestra Summer concert and the opening of the District Nurses Clinic Room in the Roger Edwards Building.

September 8th saw the sad passing of Her Majesty the Queen. At the Sessions House, we had a ceremony to lower the Union Jack. A few days later, I attended the Proclamation of King Charles III at County Hall. In this same month I also visited Dora Sales MBE to wish her a Happy 100th Birthday, judged at the Usk Agricultural Show, opened the new Baby and Toddler group run by the Priory Church of St Mary and presented specially commissioned pens in memory of Cllr Jill Jerimiah to year 3 students at Usk Primary School who had gained their pen license. I was also a guest of the Usk Rotary at their opening of the Alfred Russel Wallace Arboretum in Usk.

In October, I attended the Crickhowell 'Save The River Usk' walk. We had the Blaenavon Male Voice Choir give us an amazing fundraising concert at the Priory Church of St Mary with guest singers Deb Hancock and Chris Moreton. I had tea with Cllr Maxine Mitchell, Mayor of Caldicot, along with Caldicot residents and school children and also attended the Usk Rotary Musical Concert fundraiser for the Mayor's Appeal in the Memorial Hall.

In November, I had the pleasure of taking some chocolates and flowers to Mrs Winnie James on her 104th Birthday. I attended the Dedication of the Garden of Remembrance and laid a wreath at the War Memorial at the Remembrance Service at the Priory Church of St Mary. Ian Williams and Michael Barnett gave us a superb Flanders & Swann fundraising concert at the British Legion. I was invited to the Abergavenny Mayoral Civic Service and Reception in St Mary's Abergavenny. Kelly and her team requested that I cut the ribbon to open our new Usk restaurant 'The Alfred Russel Wallace.' The Usk Christmas Panto returned with 'Cinderella's Fellas.' As many of you may know, in previous pantomimes, I have been cast as the Town Mayor, however, apparently this year this role was seen as to be too grand for me and I was demoted to Town Crier!

December saw the return of the Christmas Market in Twyn Square. Unfortunately, we were informed that the Cairngorm Reindeers are no longer travelling so far away from home, so as an alternative, there was a Festival of Carols at the Priory Church of St Mary followed by a Lantern Parade to the Sessions House. I attended the Usk Brass Band Christmas Concert, gave a reading at the St Mary's Nine Lessons and Carol Service and I was a guest at the Usk School Christmas Dinner with all the children.

A quiet January, however, the band '400 What!' gave us a fundraising concert at the New Court Inn. In February, I met the Mayor of Chepstow, Cllr Margaret Griffiths, at their 'Vision for Chepstow' event. I was invited by the Young Farmers' Club to my first visit to the International Conference Centre to watch the talented YFCs perform in their Showcase Concert and prior to St David's Day the Usk Hub requested that the 'Mayor's Maestros' perform some Welsh songs at their St David's Day event.

March brought St David's Day and I was asked to give a Welsh reading at St Mary's on the 1st of March. The Singing Club, together with soloist Emilie Parry-Williams and the Chepstow Chatelaines, gave a wonderful fundraising Afternoon Tea Concert in a packed Memorial Hall. My wife, Sarah, the Mayoress, organised a sell-out 'Mayor's Spring Fling' Concert with the very talented Tim Southern. Also in March, I had the pleasure of attending the Music for Youth Showcase Concert at Monmouth Comprehensive School to listen to the vast range of young musical talent in our County.

In April, my daughter, Katie organised a family 'Bingo Bango' fundraising evening at the Memorial Hall, insisting that I was the bingo caller. Parkinson's Monmouthshire, one of my chosen Mayor's Appeal charities, invited me to their 10 Anniversary Afternoon Party. Sarah and I also attend our first Iftar Muslim shared meal at County Hall. Everyone was in full voice for the return of the Usk Cymanfa Ganu in the Sessions House, proceeds were shared with the Mayor's Appeal, Ukraine Appeal and the Turkey & Syria Earthquake Appeal. My relentless fundraising daughter suggested we organise a family 'May Day Pyjama Walk' which was well supported by many Usk families. As the Mayor and Mayoress, we walked in our Chains of Office in Dragon & Cow Onesies! Proceeds were shared with the Mayor's Appeal and The Leukaemia and Lymphoma Society.

Although May has been my final month as the Mayor of Usk, it has been a busy one. I was given the difficult task of judging the handmade crowns at Usk Primary School and at Usk Nursery. I attended a Royal Picnic and Singing Concert at Little Explorers Nursery; planted an oak tree to commemorate the King's Coronation in the Alfred Russel Wallace Arboretum and opened the very successful Bridge Street Coronation Street Party. At our Usk Town Council Presentation Evening my wife and I presented our well-deserved Community Awards to Barry & Ann Morse, Angela Jones and Sue Cowburn and was delighted to hand over cheques to our Mayor's Appeal charities totaling an amazing £10,560. We are so grateful to the businesses, groups and residents that have supported our events.

Amongst all this I have also attended nine HM Prison Officer Graduation Ceremonies in the Sessions House, Courtroom, seeing new officers complete their training and starting their careers in the Prison Service.

My wife and I have thoroughly enjoyed the past 12 months and offer our incoming Mayor Cllr Steve O'Brien our best wishes for the year ahead.

1.6 Minutes of the Annual Meeting held on 16th May 2022.

To note the Minutes of last Annual Meeting held 16th May 2022 were adopted at the Ordinary Meeting held on Monday 13th June 2022

1.7 To review and formally adopt the model Code of Conduct.

Resolved: Full Council formally adopted the Code of Conduct

1.8 To review and formally adopt Standing Orders for 2023/2024

Resolved: Full Council formally adopted the Standing Orders

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1.9 To review and adopt Financial Regulations.

Resolved: Full Council formally adopted the Financial Regulations

2.0 To review and adopt the Annual Risk Assessment 2023-2024

Resolved: Full Council & adopted this

2.1 To review and adopt the following Council policies:

- ❖ Freedom of Information
- ❖ General Privacy Notice
- ❖ Information & Data Protection Policy
- ❖ Press, Media & Publicity
- ❖ Safeguarding Policy
- ❖ Social Media Policy
- ❖ Complaints Policy

Resolved: All of the above were formally adopted by Full Council

2.2 Adoption of Income & Expenditure Report for 2022/2023 note S.137 Expenditure and Council Assets

- Due to unforeseen circumstances, the report is not available.
- The report will be available at the next ordinary meeting.

Full Council reviewed the following.

- Annual Return
- Internal Auditors Report
- Income and Expenditure
- Balance sheet
- Annual Governance Statement
- Council Assets
- Section 137 spending

Resolved: The Year End figures are to be internally audited next week.

2.3 To adopt the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales Annual Report (RPWAR) 2023-2024 relating to Councillor Allowances – if councillors wish to forgo allowances, please submit in writing to the Clerk.

Resolved:

- The RPWAR was noted.
- Members will notify the Clerk in writing should they wish to forgo payment.

2.4 To review council's and staff subscriptions

- **One Voice Wales**
- **Society of Local Council Clerks**

Resolved: Full Council approved the above subscriptions

2.5 To confirm Insurance Cover Period from 31st March 2023 to 31st March 2024.

Resolved: Full Council confirmed this

2.6 Proposals for appointments of members to committees and as representatives of local organizations.

Resolved: Due to UTC being reduced to seven members and to help ensure a quorum at meetings it was resolved that all members will sit on the following committees.

- Finance
- Planning
- Sessions House \management
- Usk Masterplan
- Events
- Environment
- Community Engagement

Appointments for

General Emergency Committee - Cllrs Howells, O'Brien, Roderick, Harrison & Peacock

Appraisal - Cllrs Howells & Ivin

2.7 Nominations for Town Constables.

It was proposed Robert Hamer and Shaun Galletley retain their positions as Town Constables for the coming year 2023-2024

Resolved: All Cllrs were in favour of this proposal

2.8 To Receive and adopt the Annual Report 2022/2023

Resolved: Due to unforeseen circumstances this report is not yet available.

2.9 To determine the time and place of Ordinary Meetings of the Council up to and including the next Annual Meeting

Resolved: Hybrid Ordinary Meetings of the Council will be held at 6pm on the 2nd Monday of each month excluding August.

12 th June 2023
10 th July 2023
August Summer Recess
11 th September 2023
9 th October 2023
13 th November 2023
11 th December 2023
8 th January 2024
12 th February 2024
11 th March 2024
8 th April 2024
13 th May 2024