

In the interests of transparency, minutes will be published in draft form within seven working days of the meeting. Please note that draft form minutes have not yet been formally approved by Councillors as a true and correct record of the meeting.

**Minutes of a Hybrid Annual Meeting held in Sessions House
via Zoom conferencing on Monday 13th May 2024 at 6.00pm**

Present Cllr. M Howells, Cllr Steve O'Brien, Cllr G Roderick, Cllr K Peacock,
Cllr D Harrison, County Cllr Tony Kear

1.1 Chair's Announcements

a) To receive apologies for absence

Cllr Alison Ivin

1.2 Election of Mayor for 2024/25

Resolved: Cllr Kay Peacock was elected as Chair for 2024/2025

a) Mayor to sign DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE

Resolved: Cllr Peacock signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office as Town Mayor

1.3 Election of Deputy Mayor 2024/25

Resolved: Cllr Dave Harrison was elected as Deputy Chair 2024/2025

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

There were none.

1.5 Retiring Chairman's report by Cllr Steve O'Brien

"As I reflect on the past year, it has been an eventful term filled with memorable moments and meaningful connections.

To begin with, I had the honour of attending the Election and Installation of MCC Chair Cllr Meirion Howells at County Hall. It was wonderful to see a friend and colleague elevated to such an exalted role. A time to celebrate leadership and the commitment to serving our community.

In May, I joined a public march in Brecon to raise awareness of damage caused to our rivers by pollutants. The march was widely supported by the public and fellow councillors from towns through which the River Usk flows. It was a powerful demonstration of combined communities who are dedicated to preserving and protecting our natural resources.

June brought opportunities for strengthening our relationships and celebrating our connections.

We reaffirmed our friendship and commitment to our Twin Town of Graben Neudorf, by hosting a reception dinner for the Burgermeister Christian and consort Anja Eiheim at the Three Salmons. The bonds we share with our Twin Town are invaluable and contribute to the cultural richness of our community.

It has been my absolute pleasure to attend every Prison Officer Graduation Ceremony at the Sessions House, one every seven weeks. Congratulating the successful officers and presenting them with certificates and accreditations was a moment of pride for all of us. This interaction formed a collaboration with the Governor of Usk Prison, Rob Denman, with the intention of raising the community profile of the prison. By working together, we are striving to create a positive impact and

foster understanding between the prison and the wider community. A number of hand-made benches have been made to commemorate loved ones and the Prison has attended several markets promoting their wooden crafts.

June also witnessed my participation in the Fly the Flag Armed Forces Day Commemoration at County Hall. Honouring and acknowledging the dedication and sacrifices of our armed forces is a responsibility I hold close to my heart.

The month of June was further enriched by the Usk Open Gardens weekend. Meeting the multitude of visitors from far and wide who came to explore the beauty of our town was an absolute pleasure. The variety and splendour of the gardens left a lasting impression on all who attended.

In July, the Usk Panto Players funded a new Heart Defibrillator to add to the already impressive collection in Usk. The official opening took place at the new site on Burrium Gate. The owners of the hosting property generously agreeing to fund the electricity running costs. We are truly blessed by living in such a benevolent town.

Following on from this, I attended a valuable and informative training course at the Usk Hub and learned how to use Heart Defibrillator.

July also marked the return of the Annual Duck Race from the Usk River Bridge. The event witnessed an incredible turnout, with people from as far away as the Philippines joining in the festivities. Once again, a testament to the community spirit and the joyous nature of our town.

Summer wouldn't be complete without a Strawberry Tea, much to Peter's delight we were invited to attend the Church Event at the Centenary Hall and indulged in scones, cream, and strawberries. I was pleasantly surprised to hear that my contribution of a homemade cake, was auctioned and made a handsome profit for the church at auction. It was heart-warming to see our community come together to support a worthy cause.

Strengthening bonds with our neighbouring towns of Abergavenny and Caldicot as I shared in the delights of Cllr Anne Wilde and Cllr Maxine Mitchel as they celebrated becoming Mayor. Such a wonderful opportunity to network with colleagues and to share our experiences.

The HMP Usk Eisteddfod in July was a wonderful event promoting and celebrating everything that is Welsh. A wonderful array of poems, music and songs. The Bards Chair, made in the prison's own woodworking shop by the inmates, was truly remarkable and a sight to behold.

August brought new experiences and insights. I had the opportunity to visit the Llanfoist Water Treatment Centre and gained a fascinating insight into how waste is purified. Understanding the processes that contributes to the sustainability of our environment is essential for progress.

One of the proudest moments in August was bringing the Pride Event to Usk. Despite the challenging weather, we had a glorious day of celebration and acceptance. Embracing diversity and creating an inclusive community is a core value.

September marked the commencement of the monthly Tea Dances in Usk. Not only do these events raise money for charity, but more importantly, they have also become a wonderful and inclusive social activity for anyone, whether a dancer or not.

I am truly grateful for the countless volunteers who selflessly contribute their time and efforts to make these dances a success.

This year, we had the pleasure of celebrating the delayed 40th Anniversary of Twinning with Graben Neudorf. It was heart-warming to see so many of our friends make the effort and travel across from Germany to celebrate this milestone. A special mention goes to Molly for her verbal translation of my speech. Well done, Molly!

The annual Usk Show in September was as amazing as always. Held in scorching September sunshine, we embraced the spirit of competition and community. Congratulations to the organisers for their hard work and dedication.

While we celebrated many joys, we also experienced loss.

We said goodbye to one of our finest Usk Statesmen, Roger Galletley, who left behind such a legacy of remarkable achievements.

The tributes paid at his funeral service were a testament to his impact on our community and will forever be remembered.

In December, the Christmas spirit filled our town with joy and celebration. The Women's Institute Christmas Market at the Memorial Hall was a splendid event, kicking off the festive season.

The return of the Victorian Christmas Market brought a host of new visitors to Usk as we embraced the spirit of the Victorian era and dressed for the occasion. Our now annual Festival of Carols and Lantern Parade filled us all with joy and delight as we came together to celebrate.

Continuing the singing theme, December was filled with various carol services and concerts. From the Civic Carol Service to the Christmas Singalong at the Sessions House, we embraced the spirit of the season through song. Midnight Mass marked the culmination of our festive celebrations and by now stretching our vocal chords to their limits and probably persecuting a few ears!

As we welcomed the new year in January, the Come and Sing Event brought us a magical evening of the most delightful music, truly amazing when it evolved from a one-day workshop. Thanks to the musical talents of the singers, the musicians and the conductor Drew. It was a testament to the power of music to create a sense of unity and joy.

It was a privilege and an honour to be invited to attend the licensing service of the Reverend Sally Ingles Gillis as Ministry Leader for the Heart of Monmouthshire Ministry and Area Dean.

Reverend Sally's presence has been a blessing to our community, and we are grateful for her leadership and support.

The Mayor's Black Tie Charity Dinner Dance, held in February was a wonderful evening raising a significant amount of money charity. It was a night filled with delicious food, great music, dancing, laughter, and a sense of community coming together for good causes.

We said a sad farewell to Fr Bernard Sixtus, who served Usk for the past ten years. His journey continues with a new parish in Weston and he will be dearly missed. We are grateful for his service and dedication to our community.

I was wonderful to attend the Dolman Theatre to support our Young Farmers as they performed in the Gwent YFC Entertainment Evening. Whilst a joyous and entertaining evening, there were some hard-hitting dramas acted out. Congratulations to the overall winners Abergavenny and congratulations to Usk Young Farmers for their drama about Dementia.

March brought us the joy of the Usk Choral Festival, a host of unbelievable talent spread over several venues over several days. Congratulations to Drew Morton for organising a wonderful event and putting Usk firmly on the music scene.

It was my great pleasure to make my first trip to Graben Neudorf as part of the twinning partnership. Our friendships were re-affirmed and strengthened and we left happy in the knowledge that our partnership is going from strength to strength, with lots of new initiatives planned for the future.

As I look back on the past year, I can't help but feel a sense of gratitude for the incredible moments shared, the connections made, and the progress achieved.

Together, we have celebrated our town, supported our community, and embraced the spirit of togetherness.

I want to express my heartfelt thanks to all the individuals, organisations, and volunteers who have contributed to making our town a vibrant and thriving community. Your dedication, passion, and commitment are truly inspiring.

Today, is my last day as a Councillor for the wonderful town of Usk. Although I am resigning from my current positions, please rest assured that my dedication to the town of Usk remains unwavering. I will seek alternative avenues to contribute and make a positive impact within our community. I am deeply invested in the well-being and prosperity of Usk, and I will actively support its growth and development. As UTC moves forward, I hope that you continue to work together, to support one another, and to strive for the betterment of Usk.

Thank you."

In light of the resignations of Cllr O'Brien and Councillor Roderick, Cllr Howells expressed gratitude for their hard work and dedicated service to Usk Town Council. Cllr Howells also extended thanks to Diane Richards, the Responsible Financial Officer/Sessions House Manager, for her diligent work and huge contribution to the Council.

1.6 Minutes of the Annual Meeting held on 15th May 2023.

To note the Minutes of last Annual Meeting held 15th May 2023 were adopted at the Ordinary Meeting held on Monday 12th June 2023 – change

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 2024/2025

Resolved: The Standing Orders are currently under review and will be presented for approval at the next Full Council Meeting

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 2024-2025

Resolved: Full Council adopted this

It was noted that this is a live document and will be reviewed and updated accordingly

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 2023/2024 note S.137 Expenditure and

Neither the following documents nor the **Income & Expenditure Report for 2023/2024** are available.

- Annual Return
- Internal Auditors Report
- Income and Expenditure
- Balance sheet
- Annual Governance Statement

Resolved: UTC will not be able to meet the deadline for submitting the Annual Return by June 30th. Therefore, a notice will need to be posted on both the noticeboard and website indicating our inability to meet the deadline. In August, we will receive a written reminder giving us until the end of September to complete the Annual Return.

2.0 To appoint an internal auditor for 2024-25.

Resolved: UTC is in the process of selecting a new auditor in accordance with the audit office's recommendation to rotate auditors every 10 years. auditor

- **Council Assets formally** adopted by Full Council
- **Section 137 spending** formally adopted by Full Council

2.3 To adopt the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales Annual Report (RPWAR) 2024-2025 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 2024 to 31st March 2025.

Resolved: Full Council confirmed this

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

Resolved: Due to so few Members currently five, and in order 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

Appointments for

General Emergency Committee – to be determined at the next Full Council Meeting

Appraisal – The Chair and another Member to be determined at the next Full Council Meeting

2.7 Nominations for Town Constables.

Shaun Galletley has stepped down as Town Constable – he was thanked for his time as Town Constable

It was proposed Robert Hamer retain his position as Town Constable for the coming year 2024-2025 and a new constable be appointed at a later date.

Resolved: All Cllrs were in favour of this proposal

2.8 To Receive and adopt the Annual Report 2023/2024

Resolved: 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.

Ordinary Meetings
10 th June 2024
8 th July 2024
9 th September 2024
14 th October 2024
11 th November 2024
9 th December 2024
13 th January 2025
10 th February 2025
10 th March 2025
14 th April 2025
12 th May 2025