

**Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of St Nicholas with Bonvilston Community Council,
held on Thursday 27th of February 2025.**

A hybrid meeting was held with Members and residents able to attend at the Field Study Centre, Amelia Trust Farm or remotely in accordance with the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and the council Standing Orders.

Members present: Cllr I Perry (Chair), Cllr A Harris, Cllr C Volrath, Cllr M Hinton, Cllr I Forcada, Cllr G Ward, Cllr M Farkasovska, Cllr J Griffiths.

Also present: Francesca Pridding (Local Government Resource Centre).

Two members of the public were in the room and four accounts joined the meeting remotely.

The meeting was opened by the Chair at 19:02.

1. Chair's welcome and introductions

The Chair confirmed quorum and introduced members of the council to the public.

2. To receive apologies for absence

None.

3. To receive declarations of interest

None.

4. To approve Minutes

- a. Meeting of February 11 – approved
Proposed Cllr Harris, seconded Cllr Hinton.

5. Feedback from Warm up with a Cuppa – Baffle Haus

More than 40 residents had attended the event on the morning of Wednesday, February 12. A resident has contacted the council with constructive comment. They would have liked their leaflet to have arrived earlier – theirs was the final leaflet delivered. They would like event in the evening and opportunity to meet with the Crime Reduction Officer at a future event. The next coffee morning is expected to be held on Wednesday, March 12 at the Amelia Trust Farm, with a representative of Value in the Vale present.

6. Clerks' activity report and updates on Community Council projects

- a. **Planting of living bollards**
The first have been planted but planting is time consuming.
Community Payback approached to help
- b. **Warm up with a cuppa – March 12**
Expected to be held at the Amelia Trust Farm
- c. **VE Day 80**
The piper who performed for D Day 80 has been booked for 6pm on VE Day 80. A band is required for later in the evening.
- d. **Walk and afternoon tea on the Green, Bonvilston – Sunday, June 1**
Barry Brass conformed to perform.
- e. **Walk and afternoon tea on the Village Green – St Nicholas**
Meet and greet to be arranged on a farm. Bayside Boogiemmen offering an eight-piece band at £150 per member (£1050) – 1960's era music. June 29.
- f. **VJ Day 80**
Weekend of August 15 to 17. Skyliners Big Band approached to play music of the 1940's including that of Glen Miller.

7. Planning decisions and updates

None.

8. To consider planning matters

- a. **Land adjacent to Hellas, Twyn Bach, St Nicholas**
Construction of a single residential dwelling on land adjacent to Hellas.
Amended plans, reconsultation.
No comments

9. To consider

- a. **Milton Keynes, accessible pedestrian gates at Bonvilston**
It was resolved to purchased two one-way opening Milton Keynes pedestrian gates.
Proposed Cllr Volrath, seconded Cllr Ward.
- b. **Telephone box refurbishment**
The company that painted the phone box in Llancarfan has quoted. No other quotes have been received. A schedule of works will need to be produced prior work beginning. Cllr Volrath to seek further quotes.

10. To consider financial matters

- a. **Payments received**
£4,500 – grant towards paving around Memorial (Feb 20)
- b. **Bank balance**
£67,894.85 (current account), plus £30,000 (savings)



c. **Payments to Approve**

- PR Accountancy (Gocardless) – Payroll – £20.00 (direct debit) – March
 - Acrobat DC subscription – £19.97 (card) – March
 - Enwau – Clerks email – £10.26 (card) – March
 - Giff Gaff – phone and data – £6 (card) – March
 - Scribe – accountancy package – £58.80 (direct debit) – March
 - LGRC – Locum Clerk, January, 17 hours – £872.73 + VAT = £1,031.41
- PR Accountancy do the councils payroll and return a nil value to HMRC when no employee is in post.

Proposed Cllr Volrath, seconded Cllr Hinton.

- Armstrong Masonry – removal of old paving, restoring original ground level and supplying and laying of new paving around Memorial. Supplying paving for picnic bench area and picnic bench assembly and installation. Engraving of the word 'Peace' in different languages x11. Removal of plaques on Memorial and repair of step and engraved names and filling of drilled holes – £14,990 + VAT = £17,988.00

There was a lively, and occasionally fractious, discussion of the payment of this invoice, as current members of the council raised concerns that they had not seen the quotation or invoice for the work.

A member of the public twice raised their hand to raise concerns over the tone of the questioning by a member of the council.

All members agreed that they were happy with the standard of the work and that the reason for any delay in payment did not reflect any concerns about the work itself, but rather over the procurement process.

In 2023 a grant was awarded to the council for part of the work on the basis of three submitted quotes. Over the two-year period of the project, additional works were commissioned and a second grant awarded to the council.

Francesca Pridding introduced herself as a Principal Member of the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC), CiLCA qualified, a lawyer and having experience of working in some of the smallest and largest Town, Community and Parish Councils.

Caution was advised on criticising contracts in public.

Whilst the costs associated with the procurement process hadn't been fully recorded in Minutes, the Chair, supported by Ms Pridding, advised that the councils recording of the procurement wasn't a matter for the contractor and that the council risked reputational damage if payment was refused or delayed further.

The chair advised that the council has a trail of recorded updates on the project from early 2023 in meeting agenda and minutes and Ms Pridding told the council these are sufficient to demonstrate that the council knowingly entered a contract. The work took place over a period of three months, starting prior to Remembrance.



Cllr Perry raised the issue of some members demanding too much of him, beyond the role of Chair and Member of the Community Council.

Following thirty-five minutes of dialogue, it was **resolved** that payment to be made subject to a correctly addressed invoice.

A request will be made of the invoice to be broken down between materials and labour.

Proposed Cllr Volrath, seconded Cllr Perry

d. **Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972**

There are 970 electors, and £11.10 may be spent per elector using the S137 power.

e. **Potential grants to St Nicholas Church**

St Nicholas Church have withdrawn their request for an annual grant of £5,000. Previously, s137 was used to provide a £400 grant to the church for grass cutting. Since the Community Council partnered with Community Payback, this grant is no longer valid as the cost of grass cutting in the Church has dropped from £1,440 a year to zero. Community Payback carry out maintenance work for the Community Council around the community.

A grant request remains active for a grant for renewing the paving at the front of the church.

Francesca Pridding advised that Community Councils are supposed to be secular organisations. As the Church is still active, she was reluctant to suggest the Community Council fund the Church in any way as it is a specifically excluded area in legislation.

There is no budget line for 2025-26 for the council to pay for such works

f. **To approve the Budget for 2025-26**

The proposed budget had been revised to offer better explanations of the amounts proposed for spending since the publishing of the agenda following member queries by email. The Chair ran through each line of the revised proposed Budget for 2025-26.

It was agreed to continue to use the accountancy package, Scribe.

Consideration to be given to banking with Unitary Trust. This is due to issues with Barclays such as signatories being deleted from the mandate and Cllr Hinton still waiting for online banking. Francesca Pridding recommended the council to couple Unitary Trust Bank and Scribe for its financial management – transferring money by cheque.

It was **resolved** to adopt the revised proposed **budget of £82,450**.

Proposed Cllr Harris, seconded Cllr Volrath.

g. **To agree Reserves**

The Community Council should retain 6-months expenditure in reserves – a minimum of £42,000. The council needs to work for compliance with the Practitioners Guide. A £60,000 reserve would be quite substantial, but the



council is unsure as to what its actual level of reserve is. End of year reserves may be as low as £55,000. £40-£50,000 would be a good level to retain. The cost of a Locum Clerk and the associated risks were raised. The council will minute any amount taken from reserves.

A Reserves Policy was recommended for the Annual Meeting.

h. **To approve the Precept for 2025-26**

A member proposed a precept of £25,650, bringing reserves down to £40,000 based on not spending all the money in the budget. There was a request to reopen the budget decision to fit the precept.

The Chair made Members aware of the lack of time to make a decision and allowed the meeting to continue beyond the two hours set by the council's Standing Orders. The precept to fully fund the budget that had been agreed.

Cllr Perry proposed a gradual reduction of reserves of 10% (about £6,000) due to uncertainty.

A Member of the public attending remotely interrupted the meeting wishing to speak. The Chair, following consultation, granted the request for relevant matters to be raised.

Cllr Perry proposed a vote on a precept that would result in a reduction of the reserves of £15,000, this was opposed.

The caretaker asked those present in the meeting room to leave before a vote could be held.

Cllr Perry closed the meeting at 21:24

No decision on the precept was made.

