**REYNOLDSTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL**

**MINUTES OF MEETING OF THE COUNCIL**

**Held at Minor Hall, Reynoldston at 7.30pm on Tuesday 9th July 2024**

**Present:** Cllrs. Clarke, Ashelby, Twitchett, Thomas and Spacie and the Clerk Paul Sizer

**Apologies:** Cllrs. James & Cousins & Internal Auditor Aimee Dyer

There was no request from members of the public for Zoom access to the meeting.

Councillor Clarke welcomed everyone to the meeting

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| **1.** | **Disclosures of Personal Interest**  Any disclosures would be stated before any agenda item.  Before the meeting commenced, it was noted that Cllr. James had been absent for 6 months from the meetings of the Community Council. This matter had been discussed at the previous meeting and under “the Local Government Act 1972 a Councillor ceases to be a member unless the Council accepts a reason for the failure to attend before the six months period expires”. The Council have been advised of Cllr. James’s recent ill-health. All present agreed Cllr. James to remain a Councillor. |
| **2.** | **To approve the minutes of the previous meeting**  The minutes confirmed as a true record after a minor alteration in paragraph 9 where “of” appeared as “or” and “word” appeared as “work”. The Clerk apologised and will amend the minutes and those on the website.  Cllr. Twitchett proposed accepting the minutes and this was seconded by Cllr. Thomas. All present agreed to accept the minutes after the corrections. |
| **3.** | **Matters arising**  Cllr. Clarke advised the Councillors that she has received a response from Judith Bryce, Asst Director of Operations Welsh Ambulance Services stating that the first response vehicle in Reynoldston was being used for two categories of response – Class 1 Cardiac Arrests and for falls. Cllr. Clarke had also spoken to the Fire Brigade in Reynoldston and they confirm they are being used for these two categories.  Patients so far attended since they were being re-used in 2023 Class 1, they attended 10 patients and 4 so far in 2024 and falls, in 2023 they attended 31 and 6 so far in 2024.  It was agreed that the full report would be available with the Clerk if any members of the public wished to see it.  All present thanked Cllr. Clarke for her input to this question of the usage of the First responders. |
| **4.** | **Questions from members of the public (limited to 15 minutes)**  There were no members of the public present or had requested to attend via Zoom. |
| **5.** | **Update on Boundary Changes**  Cllr. Ashelby and the Clerk had attended a meeting held by Rhossili CC regarding the proposed Boundary Changes of the Community Councils and the possibility of four Community Councils being merged into one. At the meeting was a past Chief Executive of Flintshire County Council who was able to answer all questions posed to him regarding similar Boundary Changes he had experienced.  Cllrs. Clarke and Ashelby had agreed a written response to the changes which had to be submitted by the 10th July. The Chair would send the response on behalf of the Community Council expressing the Council’s objections to the proposals.  Cllr. Ashelby proposed and Cllr. Twitchett seconded a proposal to send the response to the Boundary Commission and all present agreed.  A discussion was also held regarding the comments that had been put on Facebook regarding the Boundary Changes. Cllr. Ashelby had put a full-page article in the June Village Magazine complete with a “link” to the proposed changes and asked anyone with any comments to respond via the Council’s e-mail address. There was also a follow up in the July Village Magazine. The Clerk reported he had had no responses.    It was also noted that the last meeting was on the 14th May 2024, and the review of the proposed changes did not arrive with the Clerk until the 16th May so could not be commented on in the last minutes of the meeting. |
| **6.** | **Grants**  There were no requests for any grants received by the Clerk. |
| **7.** | **Village greens and highways**  The Clerk advised he had e-mailed Highways at City & County of Swansea on the 11th April and despite regular e-mails he had had no response to the condition of the road at Stouthall lane. The Clerk had approached Cllr. Richard Lewis who advised once he had spoken to the Highways department, they had visited and rated the site as “average to poor” and a Jet Pac team would be sent out to attend to the road as soon as possible.  The Clerk stated he was very upset with City & County of Swansea in that they did not respond to his e-mails and it was only the intervention of Cllr. Lewis that achieved a response. Other Clerks at the meeting held at Rhossili also agreed they received very poor responses from City & County of Swansea.  Cllr Twitchett advised he was collecting the motor mower from the Fire Station very soon and would arrange to cut the grass on both Village greens.  Cllr. Twitchett also reported on some fly tipping of wood on the upper green. The Clerk had also seen this and between the Clerk and Cllr. Twitchett they would remove and take to the recycling site asap.  All present felt drivers were speeding through the Village especially round the Post Office/Shop area. The Clerk reported previously contact had been made with City & County of Swansea and they implied they would investigate at the site when there was an accident there.  It is not possible to place a sleeping policeman there due to the poor street lighting.  A suggestion of an illuminated speed sign could be fitted near to the street light to obtain power. The Clerk was asked to look into costs and also if there was any possibility of a census being taken of traffic speeds at the site by using the “rubber sensors” in the road. The Clerk would investigate and advise back asap. |
| **8.** | **Planning applications**  There were no new planning applications since the last meeting |
| **9.** | **Website**  Due to the absence of Cllrs. James and Cousins, this matter would be held over to the next meeting. |
| **10.** | **Bus Shelter**  Despite details being put in the Village Magazine, there were no responses from members of the public regarding the suggested changes to the Bus Shelter. The Clerk had received a “rough” estimate to clean the whole shelter, paint inside and outside in the sum of £500. A rough estimate was made for a gate to be manufactured at c£500 plus c£100 for painting.  It was agreed that a revised quote should be obtained and also from a second source to clean the entire Bus Shelter and just paint the inside only plus fit a new metal gate. The Clerk would come back to the next meeting with costs he obtains. |
| **11.** | **Village magazine**  Cllr Ashelby will report in the next issue of the Village Magazine on the Boundary Changes, the First Aiders response and the latest news on Stouthall lane.  It was agreed that the Community Council could set up their own Facebook page to highlight Agendas/Minutes and achievements they had made etc. This was agreed by all present and would be discussed at the next meeting in more detail as to the practicalities.  It was also agreed in future to rename this item on the Agenda to Village Magazine/Social Media |
| **12.** | **Training**  The Clerk is continuing with his CILCA qualifications although he cannot see anyone officially at SLCC, the awarding body until early August to discuss the work required for the portfolio. The entire qualification has to be completed by the end of February to achieve the funding.  Cllr. Spacie is attending her first training in September with One Voice Wales. |
| **13.** | **Clerk’s update**  The Clerk reported all documentation is ready for the Audit Wales audit for 2023/2024 and all documents had been scanned, which had taken a considerable amount of time, as the Audit Office require all original documentation. He will be dropping the documentation to Audit Wales on Thursday personally.  Since the last meeting, the Clerk had paid:   * RVH £14.00 * NRP £1080.00 * Howdens Insurance £295.10 * Zurich Insurance £300.00 * Village Hall Committee grant of £1000.00   The balances in the accounts stood at:  Current account £799.22  Deposit account £21254.24 giving a total of £22053.49  The Clerk sought permission to pay:   * One Voice Wales for training of £40.00 * SLCC £76.00 (although when he went to pay this amount, after declaring his new salary level, the Clerk noticed the account went to £105.00. 50% of this will be charged to Ilston Community Council. * The Clerks 4-month salary was due at £801.47 * PAYE & NI was due on the Clerk’s salary of £233.85 * There would also be an invoice for the meeting held on the 9th July from the Village Hall Association c£15.00   The Clerk also reported that he had been given a budget to replace the defib cabinet at the Village Hall of £500.00 at a previous meeting. He had eventually received a quote from Heartbeat Trust who are quoting £575.00 The Clerk sought permission to spend this extra amount on the cabinet.  Cllr. Clarke proposed and Cllr. Ashelby seconded that all these payments be made. All present agreed. |
| **14.** | **AOB**  There was no AoB |
| **15.** | **Date of next meeting**  The date of the next meeting will be Tuesday 10th September |
|  | The meeting closed at 9.35 |

**Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales: Review of the Community Arrangements of the City and County of Swansea Draft Proposal Report**

**Response from Reynoldston Community Council**

**“Those with skin in the game know what’s best for their communities” Sir Keir Starmer 6 July 2024.**

Reynoldston Community Council (RCC) has considered the Community Review presented in September 2023 and submits that the interests of the Reynoldston community are best served by retaining the present Community Council (CC). RCC requests an adjustment of the boundaries of the area served by the CC to reflect geographical and local identities.

This response is a result of gathering views from our community via the Village Magazine, the Reynoldston Facebook group and personal submissions to RCC.

**Consultation with other affected communities**

RCC met with Rhossili, Port Eynon, Penrice and Ilston/ Penmaen CCs recently and the general view of the meeting was that the proposed changes will create an increased workload for the Councillors and an excessive length of agendas in the Council meetings. It was noted that, at a time when the number of paid Members of the Senedd is increasing, this proposal will decrease the number of unpaid Community Councillors. It was also noted that the villages have distinct and strong identities. This is particularly striking with the impact made by tourism and residential caravan sites on some of them but not others. This leads to very different priorities for the CCs.

**The effect of decreased representation**

The seven councillors on RCC are close to their local community, come from a wide range of age groups and are best placed to represent the views of our locality. This would be lost if we were to be subsumed into a larger, more remote unit with less numerical representation.

RCC has worked hard to widen representation on the council. Two councillors will not reflect the whole population of Reynoldston to the same extent as seven councillors. As well as decreasing representation, the reduction in the number of councillors will lead to an increase in workload for the individual councillor, both in dealing with local matters and spending time on matters which do not affect Reynoldston. This may deter those in full-time work, and those with young and dependent families, from standing for office. This appears to be counterintuitive at a time when there is an emphasis on achieving greater diversity in democratic representation. These proposals will lead to democratic representation by largely older people who have time to undertake such voluntary roles.

In addition to personal workloads, the agenda of each meeting will be dominated by planning issues from the four wards and inevitably meetings will be longer. Potential councillors will feel that they will have to spend time in meetings which are much longer than the current ones discussing matters which are not relevant to the community they represent. An example would be the effects of tourism on Port Eynon, Rhossili and Oxwich which are much more significant than in Reynoldston. In addition, other matters, often small but very important to local communities, will not be addressed due to time constraints. Recent examples of this type of issue in Reynoldston include resurfacing the Post Office Car Park, grants to Reynoldston Village Hall and supporting Reynoldston Coronation celebrations.

RCC is an agile unit able to respond swiftly with financial support to local initiatives, for example improvements to the Village Hall and the starting up of a playgroup, without the bureaucracy and competing interests that a larger group would involve.

It is important to recognize that a Community Council has a much wider role than simply community representation as part of local democracy. CCs organise and support community events, for example the Coronation Celebrations and D Day events. They ensure community resilience in emergencies, for example severe weather incidents, and Covid-19 by coordinating self-help and support. The vulnerable are in danger of being overlooked in this proposed wider Council. All of this is done in a voluntary capacity by local individuals, with the CCs operating on very limited budgets. This will be lost with a larger council covering widespread communities.

RCC meetings are open to members of the public and are held in a convenient hall in the village itself. This facilitates local accountability.

**Working with Gower CCs**

RCC is part of the Gower Forum in which matters of common interest to the whole Gower community can be raised and we are satisfied that this voluntary group meets this need.

**Financial matters**

Currently the four CCs each employ a part- time Clerk who, in the case of Reynoldston CC, is also the Responsible Finance Officer. With the amalgamation of the CCs, the post of Clerk will be a full-time paid post, and a separate paid Responsible Finance Officer will also have to be appointed. CCs are entitled to expenses. Currently CCs do not claim travel expenses as travel is within their villages. Travel to meetings outside their village will generate increased costs.

It is difficult to see how these changes will be cost neutral.

**Boundaries**

RCC requests a review of the RCC boundary in the Little Reynoldston area where properties on the east side of the road, north of the A4118 fall under Penrice CC. The residents have approached RCC stating that they identify as living in Reynoldston, not Penrice, as do those living on the west side of the road, north of the A4118. Please see the attached map, the area under discussion is outlined in Royal Blue.

Cllr. Michelle Clarke

Chair

Reynoldston Community Council