

MAGOR WITH UNDY TOWN COUNCIL MAGOR GYDA CHYNGOR TREF UNDY

Tel: 01633 882 842

e-mail admin@magorundy.org.uk

web: www.magorundy.org.uk

Ordinary Meeting

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Magor with Undy Town Council held At Magor Baptist Church and remotely via Zoom Conference at 1900 hours Monday 10th June 2024

COUNCILLORS IN ATTENDANCE

Mayor: Cllr Carole Hopkins In person	Cllr Paul Cawley In Person	Cllr Donna James <i>In Person</i>	Cllr Mike James <i>In Person</i>	Cllr Victoria Hammett-Johnson <i>In Person</i>
Cllr Penny Kirkham In person	Cllr Frances Taylor In person	Cllr Catherine Baker <i>Remotely</i>	Cllr Dr Mario Bisi <i>Remotely</i>	

APOLOGIES:

Cllr Neeta Baicher <i>Experienced remote access difficulties</i>				
---	--	--	--	--

IN ATTENDANCE: William Lewis – Clerk to Council
Rachel Jones – Business and Project Support Officer

COUNTY COUNCILLOR: John Crook

MEMBERS OF PUBLIC:

In person: 4 Public attendees.

Mr M Burke (representing Magor and Undy Community Hub – M.U.C.H)

Remote Access (six persons first names provided on screen. No cameras. Unverified)

20 Public Open Forum

20.1 Public Open Forum (15 minutes at discretion of The Chair).

The 'Chair' Mayor Cllr Carole Hopkins opened the meeting by welcoming attendees and allowed 15 minutes Public Open Forum.

A resident read from a prepared list of observations and questions, these are summarised as follows:

- Why are the Minutes of the EXOM of 29th May 2024 not on this evening's agenda?
- Technical issues were highlighted by a Councillor online but this was not addressed. The resident expressed that they felt a contingency plan should be in place for such events

and as such an action plan should be created and circulated; this would also be a plan to cover the contingency for agenda item 10 on tonight's agenda for IT issues.

The resident requested the following information in relation to the Town Councils IT issues

- What was the issue?
- When was it resolved?
- What is the SLA with Microshade?
- What is the contingency?

They went on to express that she felt the council has not covered itself in glory which is less than we should expect and that they believe there is a public loss of confidence in the council due to recent activities.

The Chair requested that the resident provide Magor with Undy Town Council (MUTC) a copy of her written list be provided and the resident agreed.

Another resident asked about matters arising from Sycamore Field and how information and progress would be communicated to the public?

The Chair reassured the resident that there is much ongoing work to move the proposal forward and updates would be provided as soon as practicable.

A third resident asked the Chair why dog walking facilities was not on tonight's meeting agenda?

The Chair reassured residents that this is a matter of priority for MUTC and clarified that MUTC are in discussion with both MCC and MUCH to try and secure use of the field for such purposes. MUTC is currently awaiting a response from the Trustees of the MUCH. Monmouthshire planning have also been consulted and the matter has been expedited.

Mr Mike Burke from MUCH was in attendance and explained that the Trustees would be considering use of the field to come across to MUTC for dog exercising purposes.

Another resident questioned the statement of the first resident regarding the public loss of confidence expressed that this was a 'very loose comment' and was immeasurable, and they asked "How many people is it and what percentage of the Magor and Undy population does this include?" The first resident commented that this was for the Council to investigate.

21 Chairs announcements

21.1 To receive apologies for absence from Councillors.

There were no apologies

21.2 To receive any update and feedback from the Mayor in respect of meetings, functions, events or matters arising.

Cllr Carole Hopkins recognised Cllr Paul Cawley for the hard work that was put into the D Day Remembrance Service held in Magor Village. The service was well attended and ran well. An additional five councillors attended to pay their respects which was lovely to see and for all to come together for. Cllr Cawley thanked Cllr Hopkins and acknowledged it was a team approach that brought the event to fruition.

As packs were not delivered to Councillors on time due to ongoing IT issues, some information was not given to Councillors until today. The Chair granted a 15-minute "reading" period for Councillors to bring themselves up to speed on all items on today's agenda.

22 Declarations of Interest

- 22.1** To receive any declarations of interest in items on the agenda.
Cllr Victoria Hammett Johnson – item 14 Undy & Magor Horticultural Society
Cllr Mario Bisi – Item 11 Town Warden Contract

23 Correspondence

- 23.1** To note and agree that correspondence relative to agenda items has been sent and received by Council Members.

Some members expressed that as correspondence had not been received until this day that they could not make informed decisions regarding items on the Agenda. Furthermore, the printed meeting packs were missing documents.

Town Clerk, William Lewis acknowledged some items had inadvertently been omitted from the printed packs. This was due to the tighter than normal timeframes to produce the packs due to the impact of the IT issues and that several days of administrative time were lost over the past week and into this.

However, all information relevant to the agenda items had been sent electronically and was available for members to view prior to the meeting.

Cllr Donna James stated that as we did not have all the documents in front of us to consider, and in particular the financial documents required in line with grant funding policy and guidance, that the application should be deferred at this time.

Cllr Mike James supported this and said that it was an Excel spreadsheet regarding finances that was missing. Cllr Bisi also commented that some items should be deferred. The clerk was unaware of the additional Excel spreadsheets.

24 Minutes of Previous Meetings

- 24.1** To adopt the draft minutes of Ordinary Meeting of 13th May 2024

Resolved:

Deferred to next Council meeting: Although previously communicated by email to Council and published on the website, the minutes of 13/05/24 had not been included in the printed bundle.

25 Finances

- 25.1** To receive Microsoft Excel Reconciliation report of bank accounting for month ending 31st May 2024 (Appendix A).

Resolved.

Received and Agreed

- 25.2** To receive RBS Financial Software reports for month ending 31st May 2024 (Corresponded separately)

Town Clerk, William Lewis and Cllr Penny Kirkham explained that this has not been able to be completed and requested that it be deferred to the next meeting.

Resolved:

Deferred to next Council meeting.

THREE OF THE PUBLIC ATTENDEES LEFT THE MEETING

26 End of year internal audit 23/24

26.1 To receive the observations/recommendations of IAC Audit and Consultancy in respect of the annual Internal Audit Report of 25/05/2024 and agree any actions necessary.
William Lewis presented the internal auditors' observations in respect of:

1. Debit Card Limit
2. Fidelity Insurance
3. Council Assets Register

Resolved:

1. The current transactional limit is to be increased to £1000
2. Insurers are to be informed that the current budget is temporary and that current projects in the pipeline will soon utilise the current funds.
3. To review and update the Assets register in accord with IAC observation and introduce regular review.

27 Rialtas Allotments Management Software

27.1 To receive report from Town Clerk, the quotation provided and agree any actions.
The Town Clerk, William Lewis explained to Council the benefits of an improved allotment administration system would make and that it would considerably reduce man hours spent processing the business associated with the management of the allotments and collection of annual rent.
The initial cost of the licence for this software being £1006, and then £249 per year thereafter.

Current number of allotments
plots: Undy 32
Sycamore Terrace 6
Green Moor Lane 19

William Lewis reminded Council of an application for a grant for allotment improvements from Mon CC had been awarded and that £11,168 was due to be paid.

Cllr Taylor added that Council had agreed to a significant investment for the improvements needed to the allotments and felt that the current systems and processes for managing the allotments is insufficient and time consuming.

Resolved:

By majority vote, that the Rialtas Allotments Management Software be purchased at an initial cost of £1006 and then £249 annually thereafter funded from Allotment Maintenance budget. Power to spend: Section 23 Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908.

28 Grant Applications

28.1 To receive and discuss a grant application for £25,000 from the Magor and Undy Community Hub (MUCH) and agree and agree any actions necessary.

The Chair stated that "Council had no option whatsoever but to agree to this application" and that "it cannot fail". She also stated that this development had been 30 years in the making and The Hub should not be allowed to fail.

Cllr D. James stated that she took exception to the Mayors comment and explicitly requested that her comment be recorded in the minutes. Cllr D. James felt that the The Chair was leading the council. The Chair apologised stating that she was simply giving a personal opinion in that the Council should assist in any way they could to ensure that MUCH is able to succeed for the

community.

Mr Mike Burke, Chairman of MUCH trustees, was invited to address Council and he referred to the positive impact of The Hub and its growing number of users. Councillors and public were encouraged to come and visit the Hub to see and experience what is going on there.

Mr Burke outlined that there was currently a £52,000 deficit in budget which the Trustees and Manager are working hard to reduce. The vision for the Hub is for its continuous growth and the need for ongoing financial assistance to cease.

Cllr Penny Kirkham is the MUTC representative at The Hub and she explained that in The Hub Business plan it was documented that the venture would not break even until its 3rd year in business.

Cllr Bisi noted that the wording in the Grant Application form was not in alignment with the Grant Policy document.

There was a debate amongst the Councillors around current wording within MUTC policy for Grants and also areas of the application form submitted and whether it should be deferred to the next meeting once changes were made?

Cllr D. James stated that we cannot support this application as the application in front of us does not detail a balance sheet from the last financial year – this is a specified requirement of our grant funding policy. She commented that the minutes 12th of June 2023, state that there was a requirement/condition attached to last year's grant which was to receive regular updates and no updates had been received that she was aware of. Other Councillors agreed.

Cllr Penny Kirkham expressed that she felt fully informed of all required information to support the grant application from HUB. She also stated that grants have previously been given using the existing MUTC Grant Policy and felt stronger that this should not be an obstacle this time around.

Cllr Bisi stated that he had re-read the Grant Policy and was uncertain that this application could be awarded with the current policy remits and wording.

Cllr Frances Taylor addressed Council by explaining that she has also re-read the Grant Policy and that the wording in the policy does not preclude the use of grant funds for salary and revenue.

"These grants are normally offered to support a particular project, event activity or the purchase of equipment by established organisations" (MUTC, Grant Funding Policy & Guidance adopted June 2023, p. 1) It was confirmed that the policy does not preclude this and therefore the minutes will reflect that the grant can be used for salary and revenue costs.

Cllr Donna James requested on three separate occasions that it be documented in the minutes that the application is not in line with MUTC policy and that she felt it should be deferred until this is addressed and once addressed, she would be supportive. Cllr Bisi agreed and re-commented on the issues with the wording in the policy relative to what was being requested in the application.

Cllr Bisi requested that it was noted that Cllr Baker who had accessed the meeting online, had had her hand up for over 10 minutes whilst the debate about policy was going on but had left the meeting as she had not been given opportunity by the Chair to contribute to the discussion. The Clerk confirmed that Cllr Baker desire to speak and had been noted. A recorded vote was requested, but not made. A show of hands was given as a majority in favour from those Councillors in the room. Cllr Bisi requested that his vote be recorded as an abstain as he was not asked what his vote was.

Resolved:

Proposed, seconded and agreed by majority show of hands to award the Grant Application from MUCH.

1. MUCH would provide quarterly reports.
2. Attendance at some MUTC meetings by the MUCH trustee(s)
3. Council will seek the Internal Auditors opinion on MUTC Grant Policy 2023.
4. Payment will be made in two tranches subject to successful monitoring.
5. It was agreed that council should review the Grant Policy in order to create a more simplified and streamlined process.
6. That Council will update the wording on the application form to be in line with that of the Grant Policy (e.g. correcting the names of the types of grants as a starting point).

20:24 hours Mr Mike Burke left the meeting.

29 Council I.T. issues and requirements for new equipment.

- 29.1** To receive a report from the clerk regarding recent significant IT issues experienced by the council office, the remedial work undertaken by Microshade VSM and its impact on workload. The Chair provided council with the background to the issues being faced by the MUTC Office due to IT issues.

Further information was provided by the Clerk and he summarised the issues, remedial actions taken and the number of hours expended attempting resolution and the impact this had had on staff capacity to discharge business and usual.

The Clerk expressed how exasperating the issue was and his disappointment that this was unrecognised by some of the council members. The Clerk also confirmed that the issues had obviously resulted in delayed responses to emails from members of the public.

- 29.2** To acknowledge that consequent to the IT issues and to ensure resilience and agree the purchase of a laptop device in line with quotes provided.

Cllr Hammett-Johnson addressed the council explaining that they had a Duty of Care to staff within the MUTC and that the undertone of some emails and WhatsApp messages bordered on Bullying and Harassment rather than offering help, support, and solutions. Staff should not be put under undue stress from Councillors. We all have a collective goal and should have ongoing respect for one another.

Resolved:

It was Resolved that a new laptop could be purchased for the office.

Power to spend: Section 111 Local Government Act 1972 – S111 – Power to do anything that will facilitate, be conducive to or incidental to the discharge of the Council's powers and functions.

30 Town Warden Contract

- 0.1** To note that the person employed of 01st February 2024 under a six-month temporary contract has completed the 13-week probationary period satisfactorily and to consider either extending the probation period to the end of the contract (discretionally) OR to agree to making the contract permanent at the end of the temporary contract period on 31st July 2024.

Resolved:

It was resolved that the contract should be made permanent. Cllr Bisi did not take part in this item having declared an interest.

- 31 Monmouthshire CC Planning Consultations – Please access the portal link to view the following applications**
<http://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/planning>

- 31.1 DM/2024/00657 - Lydstep House, Dancing Hill, Undy, Monmouthshire, NP26 3BY**

Cllr Paul Cawley reported his views following a visit.

Resolved:

Council has no objections or representations subject to neighbours.

- 32 Town Council Notice Boards**

- 32.1** To receive observations about the Notice Board requirements based upon a report by the clerk shared with the working group on 28th May 2024 relating to condition and management of Notice Boards and to agree actions.

Resolved:

To defer this item to next meeting as the working group have not completed their evaluation.

- 33 Undy & Magor Horticultural Society**

- 33.1** From Cllr Kirkham - To note that the society are planning to hold a village show on 22 August 2024 and to agree any actions necessary.

Item noted and Council will offer support if requested

- 34 Next Meeting**

- 34.1** Ordinary Meeting – 1900 hrs Monday 08th July 2024 – Venue TBA

