

**NEW TREDEGAR COMMUNITY COUNCIL  
CYNGOR CYMUNED TREDEGAR NEWYDD**

**ANNUAL MEETING –15<sup>th</sup> May 2018**

**AGENDA ITEM 10**

**TO REVIEW AND ADOPT COUNCILS CODE OF CONDUCT**

The council adopted the Model Code of Conduct as adopted by CCBC in 2008. It is recommended that this is periodically reviewed by members to ensure that members continue to be aware of the guidance contained within.

A copy of the document has been circulated for information

Members are asked to confirm they have reviewed the document and adopt it for the forthcoming year

**AGENDA ITEM 11 – TO CONSIDER THE PAYMENT OF ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS**

Up until several years ago the local County Borough Council supplied support services and advice to local community and town councils.

With the reduction of the resources for those services this is now mostly the provision of standards and investigation into alleged breaches of the code of conduct by Town and Community council members.

An organisation known as One Voice Wales has taken on the mantle of these support services by providing training, advice and guidance on numerous legislative, operational and other procedural matters pertaining to Town and Community Councils in Wales.

Approximately 83% of Town and Community Councils in Wales are members of this organisation.

The organisation also works in collaboration with bodies such as WLGA, Wales Audit Office, Welsh Government, The Independent Remuneration Panel and Information Commissioner's office.

They also produce and publish guidance books for members and officers, can also supply legal support and advice, training, events, specialist advice if necessary.

New Tredegar Community Council has not as yet ever needed such services however members do need to be aware that in certain capacity they do have legal responsibilities such as employment law, PAYE, accounts and audit regulations and most recently the new regulations on GDPR together with local government ombudsman and code of conduct issues.

Whilst the clerk is experienced it must be noted that there may be limited capacity to achieve compliance with all current regulations without support and this would not prevent any liability from falling on individual members.

Of course membership of this organisation would not remove responsibilities but it would provide support and advice which may not otherwise be available.

One particular issue is the GDPR. It is understood that One voice Wales has organised some training for other local community and town councils and put them in touch with a company who has provided advice, can conduct some review work and take on some of the responsibilities of Data Protection officer. It must be noted that the new GDPR increases the responsibilities of all parties in handling data and potential fines for breaches are greatly increased. While CCBC may be able to offer some advice in this area their capacity is limited and work is currently prioritised on their own requirements and it may be some time before they are able to support external organisations.

Whilst it is acknowledged that the membership will cost money from Council funds it is possible or probable that advice and guidance or avoidance of issues may recoup that cost or it could be seen as a form of insurance or mitigation of such risk.

Members are asked to consider the advantages and disadvantages of joining this organisation and weighing up the potential risks of not participating.

Other annual payments relate to public liability insurance and audit fees. These are both legal requirements and the continued provision of these should be noted.

## **AGENDA ITEM 12 – TO CONSIDER POLICY IN RELATION TO PAYMENTS OF GRANTS AND DONATIONS**

The community council has a long standing policy of welcoming requests for financial assistance - it is a standing agenda item on the Finance Committee. A general policy applies to the nature and types of requests that are taken forward for consideration and the value of assistance given,

It is considered appropriate to review that the policy is reviewed and updated if necessary.

The existing policy is that requests are taken forward for consideration is a number of conditions are met. These are

- Types of request considered are those from voluntary bodies, charities, community groups sporting clubs or individuals representing Wales or the UK in a team or individual capacity.
- The group, body, charity, team or individual should be located in, be resident in or provide services to the New Tredegar wards or be of local relevance or interest.
- All requests must be in writing and supported by some financial information, balance sheets or other accounts which should be relevant and up to date.
- Requests should provide information about the reason for the requests and what they intend to spend any grants or donations on,
- Applications can be deferred pending supply of financial or other supporting information.
- Any grants or donations awarded are at member's discretion subject to the above conditions.
- Requests are not taken forward for consideration in consecutive years unless there is significant compelling reasons.
- In general an upper limit is applied \* but this can be waived if there are significant compelling reasons that can be demonstrated,
- Recipients are requested to confirm receipt in writing for audit purposes.

\*The current upper limit is £50, however it should be noted that Council reserves are healthy and the external auditors generally frown upon the build-up of large reserves in the absence of any planned expenditure and will enquire into this as part of the year end review and audit process.

Members are asked to consider this policy and review the conditions that are in place and whether these should be amended or varied.

Possible variations could be to

- Increase upper limits, this could mean that larger grants could be issued if it is deemed beneficial for the community, however without a minimum value small grants could still be issued if necessary. This could mean that larger one off projects or events could be funded without creating an expectation of receipt, increased flexibility over the amount granted may allow better targeting of resources to needs. This may help to counter any negative comments from external auditors over the building up of reserves that are not being used to the community's benefit. Care would need to be taken that high value items are purchased with then require specialist (expensive) storage, maintenance or that have a short life cycle and repeated demands may be made which are unsustainable in the longer term.
- Consider removing limit on annual requests – this may have the negative effect of creating a cycle of dependence on such funds, and stifle other fundraising activities, as above.
- Increasing publicity for the scheme and soliciting requests – the website has been updated with this information but other methods could also be used such as social media posters, contacting / canvassing youth, elderly or similar groups and asking if they need certain equipment or facilities. This may open up the council to requests from organisations that were not aware of the facility.
- Removing condition for financial accounts to be supplied. It is not considered good practise to do this as there is no way of determining whether organisations have a true need for the funds requested. It may also reduce the level of probity and governance over the process.
- It may actually be beneficial to require better or more extensive financial information or business plans etc. for larger value requests so consideration could be given to requesting additional further information in certain cases.

This list is not exhaustive

### **AGENDA ITEM 13 MEMBERS ALLOWANCES AND CHAIR PERSONS ALLOWANCE**

It is customary for the Clerk & financial Officer to place proposals before the Council, at its annual meeting, in respect of the Chairperson's allowance. The Independent Remuneration Panel Wales publishes recommended allowances for all levels of Councils based on size and finances.

In 2016/17 the Panel recommended that all Town and Community Council members could be granted an annual allowance of £150 per annum, this was to cover phone, travel and other consumables incurred in performance of their duties. This was not adopted by New Tredegar as the only annual allowance currently payable is the Chairs allowance.

These proposals have been amended slightly and now the Panel states that Community and town councils in Group with income / expenditure less than £30,000 per year are authorised to make available a payment to each of their members of £150 per year for costs incurred in respect of

telephone usage, information technology, consumables etc., and other out of pocket expenses incurred may be reclaimed at standard rates or upon submission of receipts.

Members are asked to note this information and individual members consider whether they require to submit individual claims for cost incurred up to the permitted maximum.

### **CHAIRS AND VICE ALLOWANCE/S**

The Independent Remuneration Panel Wales publishes recommended allowances for all levels of Councils based on size and finances, the current suggested maximum of a Council in band C for Deputy Mayor or Vice Chair persons allowances is £500. Currently New Tredegar does not pay any vice chair or deputy allowances

The Independent Remuneration Panel Wales publishes recommended allowances for all levels of Councils based on size and finances, the current suggested maximum of a Council in band C for Mayor or Chair persons allowances is £1500.

The Chairs allowance is presently set at £1290, in 2009/10 the allowance was frozen at its present level. It can be seen that the allowance is £210 less than the recommended maximum, so there is capacity to increase the allowance to take account of 8 years of inflation and other increases and for it to still remain within or lower than recommended values.

1 Members are asked to consider whether any deputy or vice chairs allowance should be paid and if so the value

2 Members are asked to consider whether a Chairs allowance should be paid and if so the value taking into account the current allowance and the permitted maximum together with any other allowances that may have been approved in relation to standard members allowances and vice chair or deputy mayors allowances

### **PUBLICITY**

Member's allowances both specific and general paid in a year should be disclosed to the public and displayed on the website by 30<sup>th</sup> September each year.

### **AGENDA ITEM 14. CLERK & FINANCIAL OFFICER'S SALARY & ALLOWANCES.**

The current salary is £ 2900 per annum. A payment of £100 per quarter is also made to cover telephone, broadband and office accommodation.

It should be noted that no cost of living inflationary increases have been applied to this payment since 2012. The Local Government employers paid an increase to Local Government officers in 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017 but no increase has been approved by this Council in this time period.

The clerk is an employee of the Council whose members must be aware that all relevant employment law conditions are complied with. The Council can pay the Clerk and Responsible officer any wage it determines fit provided that it is above the National Minimum Wage in relation to working hours and paid holidays.

It should be noted that increasing regulatory requirements have crept in over the years such as RTI income tax and PAYE, the website requires updating as external auditors check and verify this as part of their audit.

The pay award agreed by Unison and NJC in 2018 is 1%.

Members are asked to consider what level of pay award is to be applied to the salary .

## **AGENDA ITEM 15 –MEETINGS CYCLE.**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

It is customary for the Clerk & financial Officer to place proposals before the Council, at its annual meeting, in respect of the meeting cycle for the next year.

### **2. Bank Holidays 2019**

In general meetings of the Council are held on the second Tuesday in each month. In 2018/19 bank holidays are as follows:-

New Year's day 1.1.19 (Monday), Good Friday 19.4.19, Easter Monday 22.4.19 May day 6.5.19 (Monday) Spring bank holiday 27.5.19, (Monday), Summer Bank holiday 26.8.19 (Monday) Christmas day 25.12.19 (Wednesday) Boxing Day 26.12.19 (Thursday)

There are no meetings due to fall on the Tuesday following a bank holiday Monday so it is proposed that the cycle of second Tuesday remains intact.

As in previous years some flexibility may be required due to short notice of illness or inclement weather but in those cases meetings will be rearranged at the most suitable date either in advance of or following the proposed dates as shown on the calendar and any changes will not be made without approval of the chair.

A calendar of meetings will be provided and up loaded onto the website and members are recommended to access this and review the website as necessary .