

Minutes of the Hybrid Special Meeting of Llantwit Major Town Council held in the Council Chamber, Old School and remotely via zoom on Thursday 19th January 2023 at 7.05pm

PRESENT;	Chairman –	Councillor Mr G Thomas)	- Town Mayor
	Councillors	Mr D Foster)	
		Dr D Ellis)	NORTH WARD
		Dr P Dickson)	
		Mrs J Norman)	
		Mr E Williams)	
		Mr D Powell)	WEST WARD
		Mr J Lewis)	SOUTH EAST WARD
		Mr G Morgan)	
		Mr J Deakin)	BOVERTON WARD
		Mr W Norman)	
		Mrs S Hanks)	

Members of the Public (present in Council Chamber and remotely via Zoom)

Apologies were received from:

Councillor G John - Prior commitment

Councillor Mrs G Hughes - Holiday

There were no Declaration of Interest Forms received.

Councillor Thomas welcomed everyone to the Meeting and read the following statement:

‘We would like to clarify that the Town Council has not been consulted by the Vale of Glamorgan Council nor did it receive a copy of the letter which was sent to residents.

This meeting has been called to allow Town Councillors to discuss the best way the Town Council can address this issue.

Tonight, is a meeting of the Town Council with an agenda and strict procedures to follow. It is not a public meeting, as if the Town Council were to hold a public meeting, we do not have answers to any questions that may be raised.

I would remind those attending that only those persons who have registered to speak may do so, and they will be taken in the order of receipt confirmation that they wish to speak’.

132. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

To receive any questions from members of the public in accordance with Standing Orders and Town Council Public Question Time Protocol

Mr Stephen McGranaghan addressed the Meeting. He stated that he received a letter dated 14th December on the 30th December reference the ‘Temporary “Meanwhile Use” of the former Eagleswell Primary School, Llantwit Major to provide Humanitarian Aid of Ukrainian Refugees’.

Mr Granaghan said he recently attended a Llantwit First Surgery on the 7th January 2023 and stated that Councillor John confirmed he had a verbal conversation with Mr Mike Ingram (Head of Housing and Building Services, Vale of Glamorgan Council) that after 2 years the site would be made available for a Health Centre. Councillor John said that Mr Granaghan should obtain written confirmation from Mr Ingram. This has not been forthcoming.

Mr Granaghan stated he doesn't agree that Planning Application is not required for this proposed site. He queried that if work on the site was to commence in February 2023 how can there be no site plans available to view. He stated he had been in contact with Mr Andrew Freegard (Operational Manager, Housing and Development, Vale of Glamorgan Council) and the Leader of the Vale of Glamorgan Council reference this matter and had received no answers to this request.

Mr David Morris was the second member of public to address the Meeting.

Mr Morris stated he had also attended the Surgery on the 7th January 2023 with Mr Granaghan.

He stated he had major concerns re the effects of the infrastructure to Llantwit Major with this proposed site development. Specifically, the effect on Health/Education and local clubs/organisations. He noted the strain that would be put on the Mental Health Services. He said he had been in touch with the local Scouts/Guides and Football Club and that they had no spaces available at the present time.

Mr Morris stated he had been advised by Councillor John to write to the Cardiff and Vale Health Board for an update re a new Health Centre for the town. He stated he was informed that there was no funding and Cardiff and Vale Health Board had received no contact from the Vale of Glamorgan Council.

Mr Granaghan asked if Vale Councillors canvas Town Councillors before any decisions are made?

Mr Gareth Morgan was next to address the Meeting.

Mr Morgan stated he had received a letter reference the proposed site and had contacted Mr Andrew Freegard from the Vale of Glamorgan Council to discuss various points as there had been zero consultation with affected residents & town council prior to the decision.

Mr Morgan said he was informed that the Vale of Glamorgan Council felt that a public meeting would not be of benefit at this stage. Mr Morgan felt this was ludicrous in light of the feelings that have been expressed to him personally & on social media.

The Vale of Glamorgan Council stated that an Impact Assessment was not required as they did not have to submit a planning application. Mr Morgan felt the Vale of Glamorgan Council have a moral obligation to its own constituents to carry out these assessments.

Mr Morgan said he was told there were no site plans currently available to view and no details of the type of building to be erected. Fencing for the site will be as per recommendations from the Police Authority's Designing Out Crime Officer.

Mr Morgan stated that he had been informed that if the site is not filled with Ukrainian nationals, then accommodation may be made available to those qualifying persons currently registered for housing on the Councils' Homes4U waiting list - so it is not just for Ukrainians.

Mr Morgan said he wished to ask the Town Councillors the following questions:

1. How many of the Town Councillors are in favour of this development as it stands?
2. Will the Town Council help its voters to force the Vale of Glamorgan Council to hold a public meeting prior to the start of works where residents can ask to questions & express their concerns?

Mr Glynne Cheshire addressed the Meeting.

Mr Cheshire endorsed the views expressed by Mr McGranghan, Mr Morris and Mr Morgan. He stated that he thought it was appalling that the Town Council had not been notified of the letters sent to Boverton residents.

Mr Cheshire stated his major concerns for the impact on the town's education/transport and social services.

He stated he was totally in support of humanitarian needs of the Ukrainians, however the public need answers as to how the refugees can be integrated into the town's infrastructure.

Mr David Thomas was the next member of the public to speak.

Mr Thomas stated he had been informed that a decision was made by the Chief Executive, Vale of Glamorgan Council, at the beginning of September but was not brought to a Cabinet Meeting until the 17th November 2022. Then the emergency powers were instigated for this temporary accommodation on the Eagleswell Site. He queried how it took so long to come to Cabinet (with four cabinet meetings between these dates) and questioned the reason noted in the Report that the delay was due to the Summer Recess.

Mr Thomas asked why it was kept so secretive and noted the lack of impact/risk assessments and site plans available for viewing.

He stated he felt it was disgraceful the Town Council had not been informed. He noted the Head Teacher of Ysgol Draig had not received any information regarding the number of refugees to expect.

Mr Thomas concluded by stating that the community should have been informed in September and Senior Councillors should have had courtesy to let people know what was happening in advanced of the letters being sent.

Mr John Moison was the final member of the public to speak.

Mr Moison noted his support of providing humanitarian aid however had major concerns re the impact of such a big temporary site on the infrastructure for Llantwit Major, particularly dentists, doctors and schools.

He stated there is additional housing development in St Athan and proposals for housing along the Northern Access road. Both will have a major impact on the infrastructure to the town.

He concluded that by asking how could Mr Andrew Freegard state there were no plans available to view when this temporary development is meant to be started in February 2023.

133. MISCELLANEOUS

To discuss correspondence received from local residents reference the ‘Temporary “Meanwhile Use” of the former Eagleswell Primary School, Llantwit Major to provide Humanitarian Aid of Ukrainian Refugees’

Councillors had previously been circulated with correspondence dated December 2022 and January 2023 received from local residents reference the ‘Temporary “Meanwhile Use” of the former Eagleswell Primary School, Llantwit Major to provide Humanitarian Aid of Ukrainian Refugees’.

Councillor Foster stated he had general sympathy for the people of Ukraine and was pleased to see so many members of the public here, reference this matter. He believed the purpose of this meeting was to formulate a response to send to the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Vale of Glamorgan Council from the Town Council.

He said personally he did not think the Eagleswell Site was suitable for the Ukrainians as it would not serve their best interests.

Councillor Foster stated that the proposed new Health Centre had been in discussion for a number of years. Meetings were taking place re a Health Hub for Western Vale however, due to the lack of NHS money, at the present time, the earliest he thinks any proposal would be considered is 3 to 4 years away.

Councillor Foster expressed his concerns on the impact of this temporary accommodation on the infrastructure of the town. Already hundreds of new houses are being built or planned for in St Athan and along the Northern Access Road.

There is already a long waiting list with the local dentist and although some schools do have places there is no idea from the Vale of Glamorgan Council as how many children will be housed on this temporary accommodation and what their additional needs would be.

He stated that there needs to be assurances from the Vale of Glamorgan Council, that as soon as the conflict finishes, the temporary units will be removed and not used for housing the homeless and other refugees.

Councillor Foster felt it was essential we all continue to push for a new Health Hub on the Eagleswell site.

Councillor Foster expressed that he feels we will not be able to stop the development (‘the ship has sailed’) but should insist on a Public Meeting to discuss:

1. The management of the site
2. The impact on our services
3. Where the money is coming from to build and manage this site.

Councillor Dr Dickson addressed the Meeting stating the lack of communication reference this development was appalling and needed addressing so there will never be an recurrence.

Town Councillors and the Town Council Office should have been informed of this proposed development.

Councillor Dr Dickson wanted to support people in need however had major concerns re the impact of the infrastructure, particularly the health needs of those coming to the town and the proposed new Health Centre is in the initial stages of discussion. There is a push to undertake a 'Needs Assessment' on the health of the town's population.

Councillor Dr Dickson concluded by stating it is important to sort out the communication issues and move forward to get a Public Meeting called.

Councillor Dr Ellis agreed with the comments of his fellow Councillors, particularly concerns re the towns infrastructure, but wished it noted that if the Ukrainians do come we must welcome them to our town.

Councillor Deakin wants to welcome Ukrainians but has concerns that the Eagleswell field is not the right site for the refugees as they will be enclosed within a fenced area. He stated we must listen to the concerns of our residents. He is not sure 'the ship has sailed' and we should get the Vale of Glamorgan Council to look at alternative options.

Councillor Powell queried if the local Schools had been consulted reference this temporary accommodation.

Councillor W. Norman stated that local Councillors need to receive communication about these matters as how can they give answers to their constituents.

Councillor Williams informed the Meeting that as a Vale of Glamorgan Councillor, he had supported the Ukrainians coming however accepted that communication re this matter was mishandled. He agreed the Town Council was not notified and letters should have come out earlier but were delayed for several reasons. Councillor Williams confirmed he had seen the letter to residents before it was sent and in hindsight should have requested changes.

Councillor Williams said that infrastructure was looked at back in April as to where in the Vale the Ukrainians could be housed. Various sites were looked at including Llandow, along the Northern Access Road, MOD St Athan and Eagleswell Site. Costings were considered as well as lack of public transport to town.

Councillor Williams said he had been reassured that the proposal for Eagleswell site would only be temporary and had seen written assurance to confirm this.

Councillor Williams stated that the Eagleswell site would follow a similar design to the Pods that have been installed for similar use in Barry. He confirmed he had not seen a plan of the proposed site and we had a right to ask for this from the Vale of Glamorgan Council.

Councillors Williams confirmed that the Leader of the Vale had spoken to the Chief Executive of the Health Board about a Health Hub in Llantwit Major.

He also stated that emergency powers were used to allow the Temporary “Meanwhile Use” of the former Eagleswell Primary School, in order to obtain the funding offered from the Welsh Government.

Councillors Williams concluded he was disappointed by how some people had responded in such a provocative way, when people are only trying to do their best.

Councillor Dr Dickson requested we should ask to see the Vale of Glamorgan Councils written documentation that the Eagleswell site is only ‘temporary’ and confirmation of how long temporary is.

Councillors further discussed their response to the temporary accommodation on the Eagleswell site.

RESOLVED:

That a letter be written to the Vale of Glamorgan Council . The letter be addressed to the Leader and the Chief Executive of the Vale of Glamorgan Council. The letter will state the following response from the Town Council following this Special Meeting and wishing clarification on the following matters:

- Why did the Vale of Glamorgan Council feel that a proposal, which would have a big impact on the Town, not warrant prior consultation or communication with the Town Council? Especially when we note this was discussed at a Cabinet meeting on 17th November 2022, and that it is believed the Chief Executive took this decision as early as beginning of September.
- Have alternative sites been considered before deciding on the Eagleswell school site?
- Has all infrastructure been considered and has an impact statement been produced? Health provision (doctors/dentist), social care, education impact, lack of public transport to and from Llantwit Major, not only on the residents of the Town but also the persons being housed in the temporary accommodation.

- Is there a plan for the site? Surely for contractors to tender for the works ‘*to start in February 2023*’, and for ‘*appointed contractor and their design team has designed a sympathetic scheme which will be as unobtrusive as possible*’, (quoted from the letter) there must have been a plan even if in draft form. Where is this plan? Can we please see a copy?
- The letter states that the proposal is for a “Temporary “Meanwhile Use” of the Former Eagleswell Primary School, Llantwit Major, to Provide Humanitarian Aid of Ukrainian Refugees’. Could we please receive clarification what is classed as temporary and how long is temporary? We have been told that there is a letter of assurance which states that the proposal is temporary for 2 years. Could we please also have a copy of the letter?
- A resident stated he had been informed by Andrew Freegard that ‘should the site not be filled by the Ukrainian nationals then accommodation will be made available to those persons currently registered on the Councils’ Home4U waiting list’. If this is the case how can this be temporary and where will these persons be housed once the Ukrainian nationals are able to return home? Will this site be returned to how it is now, or will you be looking to use it for other purposes (e.g., medical facility or increase the length of time for temporary housing)?
- Have the local schools been consulted? Previously we have seen local children not be able to gain a place in the Comprehensive school, are then now spaces available? Or are additional spaces being made available? What support will the children coming into the school receive?
- How will the site be managed? Is the fence being removed? Has the local Police force been asked for their opinion of the proposal? Do they have concerns if they have?
- We strongly urge the Vale of Glamorgan Councils Officers to hold a Public Meeting in Llantwit Major to address the above points and speak to residents and answer any further questions. Surely it would be in everyone’s best interest to hold a Meeting, answer questions, alleviate concerns and take note of what these people living in the Town have to say about the proposal, so that if/when Ukrainian nationals come to the town there is no animosity towards them for the way in which this has been handled.

SIGNED

DATED

MAYOR