

Minutes of the Hybrid Extraordinary Meeting of Llantwit Major Town Council held in the Council Chamber, Old School and remotely via zoom on Thursday 9th July 2024 at 6.05pm

PRESENT;	Chairperson	Councillor Dr P Dickson - Town Mayor	
	Councillors	D Foster) NORTH WARD
		E Williams)
		Dr D Ellis)
		J Lewis) SOUTH EAST WARD
		G Morgan)
		G Thomas)
		S Hanks)
		W Norman)
		J Deakin) BOVERTON WARD
		G Hughes)

Members of the Public present in Council Chamber and remotely by Zoom

Apologies were received from:

Councillor G John – Vale of Glamorgan Council commitment

Councillor J Norman – Vale of Glamorgan Council commitment

Councillor D Powell –Holiday Leave

Declaration of Interest Forms were received from:

Pursuant to the requirements of this Councils Code of Conduct, Councillor Williams declared a non-prejudicial interest under Item Development ,To discuss email received from local resident regarding meeting with Town Council to discuss Eagleswell Development.

Pursuant to the requirements of this Councils Code of Conduct, Councillor Hanks declared a prejudicial interest under Item Development, To discuss email received from local resident regarding meeting with Town Council to discuss Eagleswell Development.

414. DEVELOPMENT

To discuss email received from local resident regarding meeting with Town Council to discuss Eagleswell Development.

Councillor Williams and Councillor Hanks declared an interest.

Councillor Dr Dickson welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked Councillors for permission to suspend Standing Orders to allow members of the public to speak regarding the Eagleswell Development.

STANDING ORDERS WERE SUSPENDED.

Dave Thomas and Richard Andrews introduced themselves to Town Councillors.

Dave Thomas thanked Town Councillors for allowing him to address the council at this meeting. He hoped all Town Councillors had read the letters from their barrister, William Webster who had written to the Vale of Glamorgan Council and the detailed planning report on the Eagleswell site prepared by their planning consultant Wayne Reynolds.

He stated he wanted to concentrate today on how the site was developed and how the residents directly affected by the development and the people of Llantwit Major in general have and continue to be, treated by the Vale of Glamorgan Council.

He confirmed that local residents were first notified of the proposed temporary development of the Eagleswell site just before Christmas 2022. They were informed the site was going to be developed using emergency powers to house Ukrainian refugees fleeing from the terrible plight they were undergoing in their country. They were told the site would be temporary for 2 years.

He said Residents around the site have known for 10 years that houses would be built on the site. When the school closed they were told that the site had to be sold for housing to cover the cost of the development of the Llantwit Learning Community on Ham Lane East and noted this has been included in the LDP since the school closed.

Dave Thomas stated that in the months following the first letter, he wrote, along with many of his neighbours highlighting the issues on the site. They were continually assured by the Vale of Glamorgan Council that it would be fine and our concerns were unwarranted. He stated things changed when the first units were delivered and installed behind his house and he was stunned at how close and overbearing the units were to their properties.

He said a public meeting was held for the community to discuss the site 2 months ago. At this meeting he stated (they reiterated) that their objections were nothing to do with who might end up living in the compound. The fight is about how the site was developed and the total disregard for both the legal and planning process the Vale of Glamorgan Council have shown.

Dave Thomas added that he had received correspondence from Miles Punter stating that the majority of Ukrainians who would have been housed on the site have either been housed by other local authorities, found their own accommodation or returned home.

Mr Punter also said the Vale of Glamorgan Council intend to build permanent houses on the site, in line with the LDP, once the 5 years are up.

Dave Thomas said that many of the objections the Town Council Planning Committee had on the site have also been picked up by their own Planning Consultants in their report. Yet the Town Council, he noted, were also basically brushed aside by the Vale of Glamorgan Council.

Mr Thomas informed Town Councillors that the expert opinion of their Barrister was that the use of emergency powers was inappropriate and illegal. He said the use of Temporary planning under emergency powers is only allowed for 12 months. The developers have been on site for over 15 months so far. He queried how temporary planning can even be appropriate for a housing estate of 90 units and a development totalling £25 million.

Dave Thomas said the outcome of this meeting can demonstrate to the people of Llantwit Major that the Town Council is willing to stand up and fight for the people of Llantwit Major. This is a chance for the Town Council to demonstrate that they will not allow the local authority to continue to ignore the valid opinions of our elected Town Councillors.

He said since starting the Eagleswell Action Group they have close to 2000 members. They have raised close to £30,000 to fund the potential legal battle. This development has to be one of the most important developments to happen in Llantwit Major in living memory.

Mr Thomas asked Town Councillors if they want this Town Council's Legacy to be the Eagleswell Development?

Dave Thomas concluded by clarifying what he and the Action Group were asking for from the Town Council. This being that the Town Council lead the legal fight against the Vale of Glamorgan Council. The Eagleswell Action Group will happily hand over the funds they have raised to the Town Council to aid the fight and they will continue to raise funds to fight this cause.

Mr Richard Andrews then addressed Councillors. He stated he had been a Chartered Architect for over 25 years and when he saw the Eagleswell Site he was keen to help and join the fight against this development and cannot understand how Vale of Glamorgan Officers have approved the 90 + units on the site and the close proximity of the pods around the edge of the site so close to the residents dwellings.

Mr Andrews stated that if the Vale of Glamorgan Planning Committee approve the Eagleswell Planning Application on the 19th July 2024 the Eagleswell Action Group will start the legal process by applying for a judicial review and trying to obtain a conjunction to stop people moving into the site until the Judicial Hearing has taken place. Mr Andrews stated that the estimated legal costs was £30,000 and the Action Group had already raised over £23,000. Mr Andrews stated how advantageous it would be if the Town Council would help with the legal challenge to the Vale of Glamorgan Council.

Councillor Dr Dickson thanked the members of the public for their comments and asked Town Councillors for their responses.

Councillor Foster reiterated his dismay at the lack of consultation from the onset to this development. He confirmed that the Town Council had made their own objections to the Vale of Glamorgan Councils Planning Officers and note that we still need to see the Vale of Glamorgan Council Planning Committees approval / refusal on 19th July 2024 before further action can be reviewed. He stated that it was general acceptance that the residents around the Eagleswell Site had had a raw deal and some of the units are totally unacceptable. Councillor Foster asked Mr Thomas what they would do if the Vale of Glamorgan Council Planning Committee refused the Planning Application on the 19th July 2024.

Mr Thomas replied by stating that depending upon the outcome and why the Application was refused would depend on if the legal process was actioned or if the Application was resubmitted in another format if the Action Group would consider this acceptable.

Councillor Foster asked how the group would feel if the Town Council tried to get the Vale of Glamorgan Council to remove 10/12 units that were causing the residents most distress. Councillor Dr Dickson suggested that the Town Council moved towards a resolution in negotiating an alteration to the site plan, as a way forward.

Dave Thomas and Richard Andrews stated they could not speak for the whole group but believed that the minimum requirement would be the removal of all houses around the perimeter and assurance that within 2/3 years the remaining units were removed from the site.

Councillor Hanks stated that the site did not reflect the proposed plans and felt before Planning is approved there should be agreement that the outside units are removed and an exit plan in place for the future developments of the site.

Councillor Foster queried the cost of the process if the group went to judicial review and the group lost the appeal. Also, if they won the process what would they want as they rarely give out compensation.

Dave Thomas responded by stating if successful and won the judicial review they would look for an outcome where by all legal fees were paid and the whole site cleared. Any funds that have been raised by the Action Group would be distributed back to the community.

Mr Thomas stated if the Action Group did take the Vale of Glamorgan Council to Court it would require three individual names to act as guarantees for the legal documents and they would be liable for subsequent costs. Mr Thomas said that this is why we ask the Town Council if they would take the lead on the legal action process.

Councillor Deakin stated as a Boverton Town Councillor he is absolutely appalled about this Application and the quality of life for the residents since this development has been ongoing and the decrease value to their own properties. Councillor Deakin expressed concerns if lost legal fight costs could be at least £60,000.

Dave Thomas noted these comments but reiterated that what has happened with this development is wrong and could happen on another piece of land in the Vale and the Vale of Glamorgan Council again would be oblivious to residents needs around the site.

Councillor Foster reiterated his sympathy with residents and noted that the situation with the Ukrainian refugees has changed and it is very difficult at the present time to know where we are going until the Vale of Glamorgan Council Planning Committee have sat. In the interim we do have a chance of getting 12 units on the site removed.

Mr Morgan stated that there were 23 units around the perimeter of the Eagleswell site that contravenes the 21 meters recommended distance between properties.

Ann Knight told Town Councillors that they should stand up for their town that they represent. The strength of feeling against the Eagleswell development is strong £7,300 raised in 4 days, up to almost £24,000 now and she assured all present that she can guarantee that funds will be available to cover all legal fees.

Steve Mc Granaghan stated his frustration with the Vale of Glamorgan Councils lack of dialogue, consultation and understanding since day 1 of this project. If the Town Council can manage to get them to communicate with the residents that would be great. He stated over 2000 people in the town have signed up to support the Eagleswell Action Group

Mr Morgan stated compromise would have been great 9 months ago but now unrealistic . He believes the only option available now is moving forward with the judicial review. Compromise could not be met with only 9 days to Vale of Glamorgan Councils Planning Committee decision on the development.

Councillor Foster asked Councillor Williams if he felt there was any possibility of negotiation with the Vale of Glamorgan Council re the Eagleswell Development. Councillor Williams stated discussions had been undertaken behind the scenes re compromise (i.e. removal of some pods from the site and an exit plan with a deadline of 5 years for this development). He noted it had taken 2 years to get to this point. He stated a Site Visit was to be held for the Vale of Glamorgan Councils Planning Committee on the morning of the Meeting. Dave Thomas requested that the Vale of Glamorgan Councils Planning Committee are taken around the outside perimeter of the residents gardens and not just shown the middle of the development. Councillor Williams agreed to ensure that this was undertaken.

Councillor Hanks reinstated that she hopes this Planning Application is refused and encouraged the handouts displaying the Fantasy vs Reality of Eagleswell Road leaflet be handed out to all Councillors on the Vale of Glamorgan Councils Planning Committee at the Site visit.

Councillor Dr Dickson thanked the Members of the Public and Town Councillors for their comments and requested to move forward with a resolution to this Agenda Item. He requested permission to reinstate Standing Orders.

STANDING ORDERS WERE REINSTATED

RESOLVED: That the Town Council reiterate their support to the residents of Eagleswell and will wait for the Vale of Glamorgan Councils Planning Committee decision on the 19th July 2024 and then reconvene to discuss the best way forward for the Town Council.

Further

RESOLVED: That a letter be written to the Chief Executive of the Vale of Glamorgan Council expressing the Town Councils concerns over the aspects of the development of the Eagleswell Site and encourage the Vale of Glamorgan Council to consider the removal of the units, who location are causing greatest concern to the local residents, at the earliest opportunity.

Also push for the Vale of Glamorgan Council to urgently develop and circulate their exit strategy for the removal of the units of this temporary development, both those which are causing immediate concern and the remaining ones following the period of 5 years, which the planning documents states is considered reasonable to allow for onward accommodation to become available and the site be decommissioned.

SIGNED

MAYOR

DATED