

Maelor South Community Council Meeting Minutes

Date: 5th November 2024 **Location:** Virtual (Zoom)

Present: Cllr (AR) Chair, Cllrs. (JG); (JB); (KO); (SH)

In attendance: Cllr John McCusker, Clerk: John Gallanders

11.1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair opened the meeting, noting apologies from Cllrs (ME); (AJ); (JT); (NR); (IB).

11.2. Report from Cllr. John McCusker

Cllr. McCusker provided updates on key topics affecting the local area:

- **Library Services Consultation:**

Due to budget pressures, Wrexham County Borough Council (WCBC) is considering a £100,000 reduction across library services, which may affect branch libraries like Overton that serves the MSCC area. Cllr. McCusker shared that WCBC would initiate a two-month public consultation, inviting residents to voice opinions on potential cuts, reduced hours, or other cost-saving measures. He emphasized the importance of the Overton Library as a key resource, particularly for elderly residents and those without other means of access to library services. It was noted that the mobile Library service has now reduced its hours of operation and locations.

Action: The Council agreed to engage with the consultation to advocate for Overton Library.

- **20 mph Speed Limit Update:**

Cllr. McCusker informed the council that recent changes to the 20-mph speed limit are confirmed to remain in effect, with no plans to revert areas back to 30 mph in the Maelor South region. Despite some public debate and requests from other areas to review speed limits, no adjustments will be made within this ward.

- **Replacement of WCBC Chief Executive:**

Cllr. McCusker reported that WCBC's Chief Executive, Ian Bancroft, will step down in 2025, though no official replacement date has been announced.

11.4. Police Update

The Clerk reported no operational updates from the Police other than notification PCSO Dean Sawyer's departure. Members suggested inviting the new Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) to the January meeting and agreed to thank Officer Dean for his years of service.

Action: Extend an invitation to the new PCSO for January and send a thank-you message to Officer Dean.

11.5. Open Community Forum:

Simon Hill will attend December meeting to present a report re Morris Homes Development.

11.6. Minutes of Meeting 1st October 2024

Proposed acceptance Cllr (JB) Seconded Cllrs (SH)

11.7. Village Projects

Bettisfield:

Donkey Field Project Updates

Updates on Donkey Field progress included:

- **Habitat Enhancements:**
The council discussed new plantings and site-specific ecological improvements under the guidance of Keep Wales Tidy. Volunteers are now confirmed to support the habitat project, and the council highlighted the importance of holding CRT accountable for re-seeding the field in the spring of 2025

Action: Clerk to follow up with CRT in early March to ensure re-seeding commitment.

- **Volunteer Coordination:**
Cllr (AJ) has successfully enlisted volunteers for tasks such as planting and maintenance, which will be scheduled based on the new plants and trees delivery.
- **Hedge Growth:** It has been identified that there is a need to trim back some of the hedgerow.

Action: The Clerk to contact our grass cutting contractor

Car Parking and verge damage – Cadney Lane

- The council discussed recurring parking issues on Cadney Lane near the Donkey Field car park, which have caused verge damage. One vehicle, owned by a canal boat owner who does not have mooring rights, was noted as a frequent cause of parking issues.
- To address the issue, the council proposed installing bollards along the verge, like those used in the layby in Penley.

Action: The Clerk will contact the Canal & River Trust (CRT) again and WCBC to source bollards.

Penley:

- **Poppy Installations:**
Members noted the timely display of poppies for Remembrance Day.

- **Rainbow Centre Polish Heritage Project:**

The Clerk has received an update on the project which will be circulated to all Members. Clarity is still required re the budget and what the actual 'ask' is of MSCC.

- **Zebra Crossing:**

Following the recent heavy rain there no longer seems to be any flooding issues. Consideration to be made in the New Year re settlement to WCBC if no other faults occur.

11.8. Correspondence Review

The Clerk summarized recent correspondence from One Voice Wales about potential council mergers to enhance efficiency. The council resolved to build relationships with neighbouring councils to prepare for potential future restructuring.

Matrix of correspondence is sent out by the Clerk every two weeks – a Cllr highlighted an issue of not being able to open – probable cause is an old computer. Matter will be resolved shortly with the purchase of a new computer.

11.9. Financials

Invoice Approvals

The Clerk presented the following invoices for approval and deferred items for review:

- **Invoices Approved:**

- Payroll services: £6.50
- Scottish Power (electricity): £452.29
- Donkey Field materials: £55.98
- Gass cutting by John Williams: £187
- Mike Sadowsky's Donkey Field maintenance: £260
- Signage for Donkey Field: £85
- Poppy Wreath Penley and Bettisfield: £25 each.

Proposed Cllr JB Seconded Cllr SH

- **Audit Fee:**

An £868 audit fee remains under deferment. Members agreed to delay payment until Audit Wales provided an itemized breakdown, especially since multiple councils have encountered similar unexplained charges.

Action: The Clerk will again request itemized details for the audit fee before presenting to Members for processing a payment.

Budget Draft and Precept Proposal

The council reviewed the draft budget with the Clerk highlighting key points:

- **Projected Carry-Forward 2025/26:**
With an anticipated end-of-year balance of £9,777 and an expected VAT rebate of £900 in March, the council projects a carry-forward of about £10,500.
- **Proposed Precept Increase:**
To meet anticipated expenses, a modest precept increase was recommended, raising the per-household precept to £33.55 (up from £32.52). For the estimated 750 households in the area, this increase supports balanced budgeting while maintaining reserves. Members discussed a possible 5% increase, which would yield approximately £1,204 in additional funds for future projects.
- **Expenditure Adjustments:**
Adjustments were discussed, including reduced grass maintenance, increased allowances for inflation on room hire, and potential reserves for future playground improvements. Salary adjustments for the Clerk, in light of workload and inflation, were noted for review.
- **Potential Expenditure**
 1. Replacement speed monitoring in Bettisfield – at present this is fully functioning but due to age it may need replacing in future.
 2. Noticeboard for Tudor Drive – this is already in the budget for current year.

Action: Members to consider the proposed draft in detail at the December meeting.

11.10: Governance:

Revised national salary scales for Community Council Clerk's salary: item to be taken forward offline by the Chair.

11.11. Planning Applications

The council reviewed and discussed the following planning applications:

1. **P2024/1451 Application for Timber Office Building at Taraloka**
Description: Application to construct a timber office building at the Taraloka site.
Decision: The council had no objections to the proposal, noting that the office building appears in line with existing site use and local environmental considerations.
2. **P2024/1411 Application an Agricultural Storage Building, Burgess Lane**
Description: Erection of an agricultural building for storage purposes.
Decision: The council supported the application, recognizing the need for storage facilities to support local agricultural activities. The council had no concerns, provided the building adheres to agricultural zoning requirements. It

was noted that the MSCC response would include specific reference to adherence to the usage within the application and compliance with all necessary regulations in particular any surface water runoff into local streams

3. Two-Storey Extension at Dymocks Croft

Description: Proposal for a two-storey extension at Dymocks Croft to expand residential space.

Decision: The council had no objections to the extension, noting that the proposed design is consistent with the surrounding architecture and meets all necessary Highways, Planning and Environmental regulations.

11.12: meetings attended by Councillors:

Cllr. (AR) and (AJ) attended a Keep Wales Tidy meeting related to ongoing environmental initiatives in the area, including project support for the Donkey Field improvements.

Cllr (JG) Attended a Madras School Governors meeting

Clerk participated in a regional One Voice Wales meeting focused on governance best practices and potential council consolidations. Updates on these discussions were shared to inform council planning.

11.13. Communications: No report

11.14. Any other business:

Cllr. (JG) raised concerns on behalf of a resident about overgrown trees on private land between two private houses. However, upon review, it was determined that the trees in question do not encroach on public pathways or roads and are therefore likely a civil matter between the landowner and neighbouring properties.

Action: Cllr JG and KO to meet the complainant and highlight the matter is outside the scope of MSCC and recommend that complainant contacts the WCBC Enforcement Team requesting their support in acting as an arbitrator in finding and securing a resolution to ensuring that the overgrown conifers are not a safety issue to the foundations of the property and the conifers do not pose a risk to the property in high winds/ snow events.

Meeting closed at 10:05

Date of Next Meeting: 3rd December 2024 in person at Bettisfield Chapel – Note earlier time of 6.30pm