

**MINUTES OF A FULL COUNCIL MEETING OF NEYLAND TOWN COUNCIL
HELD ON MONDAY 5 JUNE 2023 AT 19.11pm**

This meeting was recorded. Due to the nature of this meeting, and the subsequent newspaper reports, and internal and external investigations that are taking place, along with the measures taken at the follow up Extraordinary Meeting, the recording was extensively utilised to ensure accuracy and transparency in the production of these minutes.

PRESENT: Cllr. A. Lye (Mayor)
Cllr. A. Phelan
Cllr. A. Radice
Cllr. A. Richards
Cllr. B. Rothero
Cllr. D. Devauden
Cllr. E. Phelan
Cllr. M. Harry
Cllr. P. Hay
Cllr. S. Campodonic
Cllr. S. Thomas

OBSERVER: S. Absalom, Press
C.Cllr S. Hancock
3 Members of the public

APOLOGIES: None

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

The Council noted that the Clerk had handed her resignation in. Cllr. A. Phelan took minutes of the meeting.

4188 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The onus is on Members to declare any interests which may relate to the meeting and/or any transactions.

Cllr. A. Phelan declared an interest in Item 10; he had submitted expenses.

Cllr. Thomas declared that he was a Councillor on Llanstadwell Community Council and one of Llanstadwell's representatives on the Burial Board.

4189 PRESENTATION BY CRUISING FREE 2025

Cllrs. A. Phelan and E. Phelan invited Cruising Free 2025 to this meeting.

The three ladies, who have formed the Cruising Free 2025 group, gave a presentation on their plans to cross the Atlantic in 2025, rowing c.3,200 miles unsupported. All three of the presenter's form part of the Neyland Rowing Club. Members thought this a noble endeavor.

The team must raise c.£100,000, in order to purchase a boat, supplies (etc.) to sustain them on their journey. Two world records will be broken: one being the first person with cystic fibrosis to cross the Atlantic, and the other being the oldest woman to row the Atlantic.

The aim is to raise funds for the Cystic Fibrosis Trust and Paul Satori charities

Members asked various questions.

The Council thanked the ladies for their presentation and wished them well in their endeavours. Cllr Lye said that he had just spoken to Cllr A Phelan, the outgoing Chair of Finance, to ask if we could find £1000 and he said 'yes'. It was acknowledged that this would need to be agreed by Council at a later date.

4190 REPRESENTATION BY PUBLIC

There were no representations from the Members of the Public that were present at the meeting.

4191 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The Minutes of the Meeting held on the Wednesday 10 May 2023 were discussed.

The following comments and amendments were discussed:

4161: Cllr. Rothero requested that reference to the £14,500 cost of a potential election be removed as Cllr A Phelan did not say this in the meeting. Members agreed for this to be removed.

The minutes of the meeting, held on Wednesday 10 May 2023, were proposed by Cllr. Lye and seconded by Cllr. Harry. The Minutes were **APPROVED** as a true record of the meeting.

RESOLVED: The Minutes from Wednesday 10 May 2023 were accepted as a true record of the meeting.

4192 MATTERS ARISING

Councillors noted the following actions:

4174: The Mayor will chase the County Hall, in relation to the Grant.

The Mayor will submit a letter of disappointment as soon as possible.

4178: The Mayor has actioned this. A quote for two trees came in at £472 (plus V.A.T.). The Mayor proposed we accept this quote, Cllr. A. Phelan seconded. All in favour. The Mayor will confirm with the supplier whether this quote includes planting. This will be taken from the Mayor's Account (£290.32) and the rest from the Green Space budget.

RESOLVED: To purchase the two trees for the commemoration of Her Majesty the Late Queen and the coronation of King Charles III.

ACTION: Mayor to confirm whether the tree's quote includes the price of planting both.

4186: Members agreed to wait to order name badges until after the potential election. Cllr. Hay proposed this Motion, and Cllr. Campodonic seconded it. Cllr. Thomas voted against this Motion, all others voted for.

RESOLVED: To purchase new name badges after the potential election.

ELECTION OF DEPUTY MAYOR

The Mayor reiterated advice given by One Voice Wales: Cllr. E. Phelan may vote for her husband, Cllr. A. Phelan, as she is a Councillor in her own right.

Two previous nominations for Deputy Mayor had been received: Cllrs. A. Phelan and Richards. Cllr. Richards redacted herself from the vote; instead, Cllr. Richards proposed Cllr. Thomas for Deputy Mayor of the Council, with Cllr. Rothero seconding this.

Cllr. Lye proposed Cllr. A. Phelan for Deputy Mayor of the Council, with Cllr. Harry seconding the motion.

Cllr. Thomas had six votes and Cllr. Phelan had five. There was some confusion on the part of Cllr Lye who attempted to make a casting vote for Cllr Phelan. His mistake was pointed out.

RESOLVED: Cllr. Thomas be elected as Deputy Mayor.

Cllr. A. Radice read a statement declaring that she was very pleased that Cllr Steve Thomas had been reinstated as Deputy Mayor. Cllr Radice went on to say that she had not been able to attend the AGM in person due to illness, as she felt that she was put under a great deal of pressure to vote for Cllr Lye. Cllr Radice stated that she did try to log into the meeting remotely and had she been able to, she would have voted for Cllr Thomas to be Mayor. She went on, "I think that Cllr Thomas has been treated very unfairly by five Members of this Council. They did this as a concerted effort to prevent him from becoming Mayor and indeed they wished to demoralize him and publicly shame him at the AGM." Cllr Radice requested that Cllr. Lye does the right thing and resign as Mayor. Cllr. Lye declined saying that he did not know anything about it. It was pointed out that he had emailed Cllr Radice at 11.30pm the night before the AGM on the very subject, and that was after Cllr Harry had telephoned Cllr Radice a total of 13 times applying pressure for her to vote for Cllr. Lye or to not attend the meeting.

Cllr. Rothero raised a further matter of concern, that he had, two or three times, emailed Cllr. Lye to ask for a copy of the recording from the meeting of Full Council, which had taken place on the 9th January 2023. The requests had been dismissed with blasé remarks and a statement from Cllr. Lye that he did not know anything about the recording. Cllr. Rothero referred Cllr. Lye to an email which Cllr. Lye had been sent by the former Clerk on the 25th April. The email was also sent to Cllrs. Harry, Hay, E Phelan, A Phelan and Radice. Cllr. Radice brought this email to the attention of Cllr. Rothero for the purposes of openness and transparency. Cllr. Rothero read the email:

"Dear All,

Mike has filled me in about the meeting last night and once again I feel I should apologise, particularly to Ash, for not having the forethought to check the audio recordings of the meeting of the 9th January to make sure it ended at an appropriate time. However, I have downloaded some free software and have been able to edit the recording to remove the end part and the discussion about Brian Rothero. If it is your collective wish I shall substitute this amended version for the full copy currently on file and on the internet...

It is scarily easy to edit such a recording!...

Let me know your thoughts..."

Cllr. Thomas pointed out that if the recording had been edited as stated in the email, a significant portion of the end of the meeting had been deleted, including several agenda items. It was pointed out by Cllr Rothero that all of those included in the email were complicit and accomplices in this act.

Cllr. Rothero circulated to Council, a blog which Cllr. Lye had written in 2008. Cllr. Rothero expressed that he thought the blog to be anti-Semitic and anti-Islamic and was promoting racial hatred. Cllr. Lye denied this.

Cllr. Rothero then stated that he supported Cllr. Radice's call for a vote of no confidence in Cllr. Lye "as his actions behind the scenes have tarnished his position as a representative of this Town" and that Cllr. Lye should take no further part in the responsibilities and running of the Council until investigations had concluded. Cllr. Rothero confirmed that he had copies of 30 plus emails, confirming everything that he had said, and that he was acting for transparency. He stated that the emails between the five Councillors were morally unethical, unscrupulous, and dishonest and that they would be brought to justice, and they must face the consequences of their actions as they were all accomplices in potentially criminal acts.

Cllrs. Rothero and Thomas shared e-mails given to them by Cllr. Radice. Cllrs. Rothero and Thomas accused Cllrs. Lye, A. Phelan, E. Phelan, M. Harry, and P. Hay of meeting in secret to discuss Council business and listed a number of meetings and their agendas. It was pointed out that there were 11 Councillors and that all should have been included when discussing important matters. The behaviour was described as shocking, and Cllr. Rothero proposed that Cllr. Lye be called to resign as Mayor, and a vote on the matter was suggested. Cllr. A. Phelan stated that a motion that is not on the agenda cannot be voted for, and asked that the Standing Orders be referred to. While this was taking place, Cllr. Campodonic described the behaviour as absolutely shocking and diabolical. Cllr. Thomas said that he had read the emails and that what the five Councillors had said about other people is an absolute disgrace.

Cllr. Lye returned to the subject of his blog on male circumcision, questioning the relevance of it as it had been written some years ago. He also claimed that it had been edited and cut as he would not have written something so short. This was disputed by Cllr. Rothero who stated that he had presented everything that there was and suggested that Cllr. Lye 'Google it' saying he would be done in two minutes.

Cllr. Devauden pointed out the irony of the group of Councillors who had been behaving so inappropriately, are now turning to the Standing Orders to try to do something correctly in order to try to protect themselves, and commented that "you can't have it both ways."

Cllrs. Harry, Hay, and Lye made a number of dismissive comments regarding their meetings which they stated were allowed, but were not actual meetings, but yes, they had met and they had discussed Council business but none of it was official. It was pointed out that the meetings were scheduled and agendas for the meetings were shared amongst the closed group. It was then acknowledged that Council matters were discussed and why couldn't they discuss them as a group, but it was again re-iterated that these meetings were not Council business; merely a meeting between individuals who happened to be Councillors to discuss things such as Christmas lights. A number of Councillors protested as to the appropriateness of this, and why were a number of Councillors, largely the new Councillors, excluded from these discussions?

Cllr. Thomas expressed the view that Cllrs. Lye and Harry had intentionally conspired to defraud the Council, by manipulating the timing of the former Clerk's preplanned resignation for increased effect on a legal claim for financial gain that Cllr. Harry was encouraging and supporting the Clerk to make against the Council. Cllr. Thomas pointed to an email written by Cllr. Harry in which he stated that he would ask the Clerk to stall her letter but that he would put it in his pocket until after the Annual General Meeting on Wednesday 10 May 2023, if it had been sent. Cllr. Harry accepted he had done that.

Cllr. Lye then referred back to the Standing Orders and read Section 10, "Motions at a meeting that do not require written notice."

The discussion continued and Cllr. Rothero pointed out that if the Clerk had tampered with the recording, as she had stated in the email, she should be sacked by the Council because the fact is that she has tampered with a government document which is illegal and there could be a criminal prosecution.

Cllr. Harry articulated the view that the Council had done nothing since Cllr. Thomas has been on this Council. Cllr. Thomas pointed out that everything had been fine in the Council until he had a disagreement with Cllr. Harry and had then started asking questions about what was going on in the Council.

Cllr. Harry complained that Cllr Rothero had a lot to say and pointed out that he was not chairing the meeting. Cllr. Thomas therefore proposed that under Standing Order 10(a)(v), a vote be held to appoint someone to preside over the meeting, and proposed Cllr. Rothero as Chair, this was seconded by Cllr. Campodonic. Six votes for, five against.

RESOLVED: Cllr. Rothero to act as Chairman for this meeting.

In order to move the meeting on, a date was set for an extraordinary meeting to be held to discuss matters further. The meeting was proposed for Wednesday, 14th June 2023 at 7.00pm. Cllrs. Harry, A. Phelan, and E. Phelan gave their apologies. An alternative date was proposed by Cllr. Rothero, but this was also not suitable.

RESOLVED: To call an extraordinary meeting on Wednesday 14 June 2023.

4194

MAYOR AND DEPUTY MAYOR' S ALLOWANCES

Members discussed the Mayor and Deputy Mayor's allowances. At present, the Mayor has an allowance of £1,500 (plus expenses of £1500 to hold civic events) and the Deputy Mayor, £500.

RESOLVED: TO REVIEW THE MAYOR'S AND DEPUTY MAYORS ALLOWANCES GOING FORWARD.

4195

UPDATE ON ACCOUNTS

The following financial information had been circulated:

a) Bank Account Reconciliation Summary showing the following balances:

Current Account:	£60,859.38
General Reserves:	£9,011.27
Earmarked Reserves:	£19,000.00
Mayor's Account:	£290.34

b) Financial Statement showing:

Income:	£100.00 (gross)
Expenditure: (gross)	£2,813.05

c) Financial Budget Comparison

Councillors noted the Report which sets out the budget, monthly spend, cumulative spend and remaining amount in each budget.

Cllr. A. Phelan queried the £500 payment(s) listed under Civic Events, and £1,035 under Warm Rooms. Cllr. Phelan noted that the former would probably be monies for street parties, and the latter payment would probably be the grant to Bethesda Church.

The Council noted that a new combination lock ought to be purchased for the playpark. Cllr. Thomas raised a concern about information and account security, stating that the former Clerk was still accessing and sending emails from the Council account despite having apparently resigned more than three weeks previously. Cllrs. Thomas and Lye agreed to meet to discuss accessing and securing Council accounts.

RESOLVED: That the financial information be agreed and accepted.

ACTION: Cllr. Thomas to obtain a combination lock and tether for the playpark, and to liaise with the contractors to confirm the code.

ACTION: Cllrs. Lye and Thomas to meet to confirm account access.

4196

ACCOUNTS FOR APPROVAL AND PAYMENT

Accounts totalling £124.12 (gross) were approved for payment.

Cllr. Thomas queried the expense payment to Cllr. A. Phelan. Cllr. Phelan confirmed that he had attended a music concert at St. David's cathedral. Cllr. Thomas, with agreement from Cllr. Rothero, asked why the Deputy Mayor was not invited. Cllr. Phelan confirmed that he was asked to attend by the previous Chair. A discussion continued regarding the appropriateness of this.

The Council also agreed to release £100 to Cllr. Devauden, in lieu of the street party money, the residents of Isambard Gardens will be planting a tree.

Cllr. Hay proposed that the payments be approved, Cllr. Harry seconded. Cllr. A. Phelan abstained; unanimously approved.

RESOLVED: That any payments for this month be paid.

RESOLVED: £100 be released to Cllr. Devauden to obtain a tree, in lieu of the street party money.

4197

TO FURTHER CONSIDER THE NEED FOR SPEED ENFORCEMENT IN KENSINGTON ROAD

Councillors agreed that this is still a worry and a priority.

The average speed driven was below 30 m.p.h.; Councillors agreed, however, that this is somewhat irrelevant as it would only take one vehicle going at high speeds to cause an accident.

C.Cllr. S. Hancock discussed concerns with the Council. Cllr. Thomas asked if there was any information on how the traffic survey had been conducted, and this will be looked into.

Members noted that the Welsh Government speed limit of 20 m.p.h. in urban areas, from September, may be pulled. This would need to be clarified.

Cllr. A. Phelan expressed concerns that the speed limit is inapt, as speeders will continue to speed.

4198 CHAIR'S REPORT

This Item was postponed.

21:01: Cllr. A. Radice left the meeting.

4199 SPONSORED COLOUR RUN

Cllr. A. Phelan had been contacted by the school, it was requested that the Council purchase medals for the school for their sponsored colour run, on Monday 26 June 2023.

Members agreed to this. Cllr. A. Phelan had already sought quotes. Cllr. Hay noted that the Council still has 175 medals available from previous events. Cllr. A. Phelan would confirm numbers with the school.

4200 CHRISTMAS LIGHTS CONSULTATION

Cllr. E. Phelan updated the Council on the Christmas lights consultation. A quantitative approach to a questionnaire was agreed. Cllr. E Phelan showed a draft version of this questionnaire.

Cllr Hay requested that the questionnaire state that these lights are the single biggest cost to the Council.

Cllr. Lye confirmed that Pembrokeshire County Council has given tentative permission for a Christmas tree to be located on Policeman's Bank.

Cllr. Lye reiterated Cllr. Rothero's previous suggestion of town publicans/businesses potentially purchasing a tree for Policeman's bank.

ACTION: Cllr. Rothero to seek feedback over the Town's publicans/businesses potentially purchasing a tree for Policeman's Bank.

4201 COMPLAINTS REGARDING A PROBLEM WITH THE SCHOOL CROSSING POINT AT KENSINGTON ROAD

Cllr. Devauden brought to the attention of the Council that the school crossing at Kensington Road is inadequate for parents using their prams. The curb, it seems, is too high making prams difficult to cross.

Members agreed to contact both County Councillors (C.Cllr's. S. Hancock and P. Miller) to lobby this Council's concerns.

ACTION: The Mayor to contact C.Cllrs. S. Hancock and P. Miller to express concerns over the height of the curbs, and the detrimental effect this is having on people with prams.

4202 DISCONTENT WITH OGI (MESS AND DISRUPTION)

Cllr. A. Phelan had been contacted by several concerned residents of Neyland over the disruption of pavement slabs, and the general mess and disruption that has occurred due to Ogi's installation of underground wires. It was noted that mess remaining on the streets was not helped by the lack of rain, which would have usually washed dust and sand etc. away. Cllr. Hay pointed out information received from PCC that unless there was a pavement level discrepancy of at least 10mm, no action would be taken.

ACTION: To continue to monitor the situation and speak to Ogi about concerns if issues continued.

4203 VANDALISM TO THE BRUNEL GRAFFITI LITTER BIN

Cllr. A. Phelan, along with the rest of the Council, expressed concerns over the vandalism in Neyland. Cllr. A. Phelan noted that this has a detrimental effect on future Council decisions: making, for example, the purchasing of publicly accessible things a harder decision to come to an agreement.

4204 NEYLAND AND LLANSTADWELL BURIAL BOARD

Cllrs. Harry and Hay explained the historic problems of the Burial Board.

The Board had previously held more reserves than this Council. It was agreed, at the time, that this Council does not give any monies to the Board so their reserves can be utilised.

Cllr Rothero expressed the view that the Board needs to work as a collective.

Cllr Thomas reiterated that he was a member of Llanstadwell Community Council. He addressed the issues raised by Cllr Harry and the historic nature of his complaints. He also identified potential uses of the Chapel which has currently been allowed to deteriorate with no money having been set aside for upkeep.

Cllr. Hay said that the Council needs to understand what the people of Neyland would like to do, in terms of the cemetery. Further maintenance and investment in the cemetery will need to come from an increase in Council tax.

4205 URGENT MATTERS NOT COVERED ABOVE

Cllr. Hay noted that bunting needs to be organised for the carnival. It is estimated that this will cost c.£2,500. Cllr. Hay proposed that the Council pays this, Cllr. Thomas seconded. All in favour.

Cllr. A. Phelan observed that the Council now has 89 coronation coins left. Cllr. A. Phelan had been dropping off requested coins to residents' houses over the last two weeks. Cllr. A. Phelan is awaiting feedback over the quotation of two presentation boxes.

RESOLVED: That this Council pays for the erection of carnival bunting.

ACTION: Cllr. Hay to contact Barrie Jones to discuss bunting.

4206 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Councillors noted that the next Ordinary meeting will be held on Monday 3rd July 2023 at 19:00.

4207 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

This Item was postponed.

4208 NEW TOWN CLERK RECRUITMENT

This Item was postponed.

The meeting closed at 22:01.

Signed..... Chair Date

Signed..... Town Clerk