

CAERWENT COMMUNITY COUNCIL

While Caerwent Community Council (CCC) is open to, and appreciative of, comment and critique, we are aware that there have been a number of significant misrepresentations of CCC affairs, together with an allegation of corrupt practice by CCC Councillors, recently posted on social media sites. We believe it necessary and proper to address these misrepresentations in this open letter to the community.

COMMUNITY COUNCIL MEMBERS – HOW ARE COUNCILLORS ELECTED? WHAT ARE COUNCILLORS PAID? DO COUNCILLORS CLAIM EXPENSES? ARE COUNTY COUNCILLORS PAID?

Members of the CCC

Caerwent Community Council is made up of 10 members. Of those, 3 are co-opted Councillors who all applied for vacancies. These members were the only persons to put themselves forward for said vacancies. All other Councillors were legally elected under the electoral process at the last local government elections as confirmed by the Returning Officer for those elections. The Council also employs a Clerk who is contracted to work 16 hours per week – this is a salaried role.

Are Community Councillors Paid?

Community Councillors are volunteers and do not receive any payment for their time on Council Work. The Community Council Chair does not receive an allowance and has not done so for over two years. This allowance was replaced by the Chair's Education Award where we award prizes on a given topic to pupils of Rogiet and Shirenewton schools at an annual ceremony.

Do Community Councillors Claim Expenses?

Community Councillors are entitled to claim expenses for certain work (mainly travel) they do on behalf of the Council. No Councillors have claimed any expenses in the past five years. Where any travel costs have been incurred over this period, these costs have been borne by the individual Councillors and no expense claims made.

Political Affiliations

There are 2 Community Councillors who have affiliations with political parties. We are required to publish this information on our website. Further information can be found on www.caerwentcc.com or by request in writing to the Clerk to the Council.

Are County Councillors Paid?

County Councillors do receive salaries which are subject to PAYE. These are set by the Independent Remuneration Panel appointed by Welsh Government. All payments are published every year on the MCC website www.monmouthshire.gov.uk as are personal details of responsibilities, committee memberships and outside bodies that they are appointed to.

TIME TEAM FIELD – WHY DID THE COMMUNITY COUNCIL AGREE TO LEASE THIS LAND AND WHAT COSTS HAVE BEEN INCURRED?

Why did CCC lease the Field?

The piece of land next to the toilets in Caerwent (known as the Time Team Field) was leased from Monmouthshire County Council (MCC) by CCC in 2013. CCC agreed to a 5 year lease on the field at a cost of £250 per year. At that time the intention was to lease the land for use as a community project. Caerwent Historic Trust proposed to arrange a community archaeological project in conjunction with Operation Nightingale (injured servicemen rehabilitation) and the University of Leicester Archaeological Unit. Previous excavations by “Time Team” had indicated that there were remains in that location. Unfortunately as the plans progressed Cadw indicated that it was unlikely that Scheduled Ancient Monument consent to excavate would be given so the project proposal came to a halt. The Community Council then engaged on a process of consultation to try and find alternative uses for the field and received some useful and interesting suggestions. It has proved difficult in getting community buy-in for time and commitment for these projects and after much consideration we have decided to terminate the lease.

What costs have been incurred by CCC for the Time Team Field?

We have decided to terminate the lease after two years. We have incurred a total of £500 lease fees, £25 to Monmouthshire Meadows for inspection of the flowers in the field as a possible option for a Wildflower Meadow, £76 for the purchase of the poppies planted last year to mark the WW1 Centenary and £220 for grasscutting/clean up works. There are no costs for early termination of the lease. The total cost of this field to CCC is £821.

CAERWENT HOUSE

What are the costs for the roof covering?

Although CCC raised the original concerns regarding the condition of the building we have no responsibility for the works being undertaken at Caerwent House. These works are being funded by MCC in partnership with a

Welsh-based Building Preservation Trust. No costs have been incurred or are envisaged to be incurred by CCC.

CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL DOCUMENT

What costs have been incurred by CCC in the production of this document?

This document has been written by MCC. The costs to produce this document are not a CCC cost. No costs have been incurred by CCC for the consultation or production of this document.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUESTS

Over the last 3 years we have seen a significant increase in the number of FOI requests received by CCC, the majority of which (98%) were made by one resident. To date these have cost CCC £865.

We welcome any feedback from the Community and would encourage residents to contact us by email, in writing, on our Facebook page, attend our meetings or in fact stop us and chat about any issues/concerns. Individual Councillor contact details are available on our website www.caerwentcc.com or by request in writing from the Clerk to the Council. We do feel that it is time to address some of these myths. We hope that this letter goes some way to dispelling some of the negative comments and would welcome your thoughts.

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