



COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING HELD VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON THURSDAY 24TH MARCH 2022 AT 5.00PM

PRESENT:

Councillor C. Andrews - Mayor

Councillors:

M. Adams, A. Angel, C. Bishop, C. Cuss, W. David, T.D. Davies, N. Dix, C. Elsbury, K. Etheridge, M. Evans, A. Farina-Childs C. Forehead, E. Forehead, A. Gair, N. George, C. Gordon, R. Gough, L. Harding, D. Havard, A. Hussey, V. James, G. Johnston, B. Jones, S. Kent, G. Kirby, A. Leonard, P. Leonard, P. Marsden, B. Miles, B. Owen, S. Morgan, T. Parry, L. Phipps, D. Preece, J. Pritchard, J. Ridgewell, J. Roberts, R. Saralis, J. Simmonds, E. Stenner, J. Taylor, C. Thomas, A. Whitcombe, R. Whiting, L. Whittle, T. Williams, W. Williams, B. Zaplatynski.

Together with:-

Officers: C. Harry (Chief Executive), D. Street (Corporate Director Social Services and Housing), L. Lane (Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer), L. Rawlins (Armed Forces Liaison Officer), H. Lancaster (Senior Communications Officer), K. Peters (Policy Manager), E. Sullivan (Senior Committee Services Officer)

REPRESENTING THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION:

M. Jones MBE, K. Terry, A. Williams, A. Lesley and G. Hill.

RECORDING, FILMING AND VOTING ARRANGEMENTS

The Chief Executive reminded those present that the meeting was being filmed but would not be live streamed, however a recording would be available following the meeting via the Council's website – [Click Here to View](#). She advised that decisions would be made by Microsoft Forms.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J. Bevan, P. Bevan, A. Collis, S. Cook, D. Cushing, K. Dawson, M. Davies, J. Fussell, D. Hardacre, D. Harse, A. Higgs, M. James, C. Mann, G. Oliver, D. Poole, D. Price, M. E Sargent, J. Scriven, G. Simmonds, S. Skivens, J. Stone, and B. Zaplatynski and R. Tranter (Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer), R. Edmunds (Corporate Director Education and Corporate Services) and M.S. Williams (Corporate Director Economy and Environment).

In noting the apologies for absence, the Mayor made specific reference to those received from Councillor Alan Higgs and Councillor Colin Mann.

Council was asked to note that Councillor Alan Higgs, Armed Forces Champion was unwell with Covid-19 and so would not be in attendance. Councillor Higgs had been tireless in support of the Armed Forces during his time as Armed Forces Champion and had very much wanted to be part of this evening's proceedings.

The Mayor also asked Council to note that Councillor Colin Mann, Leader of the Plaid Cymru Group was attending a family funeral and had expressed his regret at not been able to be present this evening, however Councillor John Taylor would be speaking on behalf of the Plaid Cymru Group later in the proceedings.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Declarations of Interest were received from Councillors K. Etheridge, D. Havard, A. Hussey and G. Johnston who declared a person interest in relation to Agenda Item No. 3 – To Award the Freedom of Caerphilly County Borough to the Royal British Legion in that there are Members of the Royal British Legion. As this was a personal interest only there was no requirement for them to leave the meeting for the Freedom of the Borough Award.

3. TO AWARD THE FREEDOM OF CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH TO THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION

The Mayor welcomed Mr K. Terry, the Royal British Legion's Membership Council Representative for Wales, Mr. Alan Williams from the South East Wales District, Mr M. Jones MBE, Chair of Gwent County and Mr. G. Hill to this special evening.

The Mayor addressed Council and the representatives of the Royal British Legion and asked Council to note that last year the Royal British Legion reached a significant milestone in their impressive history when they celebrated their official centenary.

During the past 100 years they have built and enduring legacy by providing invaluable support to our Armed Forces across the length and breadth of the UK. The Mayor expressed her pride in being able to attend Armed Forces Celebrations across the county borough and witnessed first hand the integral part played by the RBL in these events.

On behalf of the Council and all residents across Caerphilly County Borough, she thanked the RBL for their tireless support, dedication and outstanding fundraising efforts that had benefitted so many over the past century.

The Mayor was honoured to grant the Freedom of Caerphilly County Borough to the Royal British Legion and she was sure that every Member of this Authority agreed this as fitting recognition of the outstanding contribution they make to our society every single day.

The Mayor then introduced the Leader of Council, Councillor Philippa Marsden. The Leader echoed the words and sentiments expressed and agreed that this was indeed a fitting tribute to this wonderful organisation and fully supported the granting of this prestigious honour. The RBL have been a constant reassuring presence for so many people over the past century and was sure that they would continue to be so for many more years to come, offering the same amazing level of support to those people who need it most.

The Leader referenced the important role of local branches and in particular thanked Mr Ken Terry for his part in Armed Forces Day Celebrations over the years, these events would not have been possible without his support and guidance.

The Mayor then introduced the Chief Executive, Mrs Christina HARRY. The Chief Executive thanked both the Mayor and Leader for perfectly expressing the privilege and pride the Council left in bestowing this honour to the Royal British Legion. The support that they provide to veteran individuals and their families was priceless. Services such as the Royal British Legion play a pivotal role in ensuring the rights of the Armed Forces Community are protected and are at the forefront of providing help and support to those who have fought for us and our freedom. Which seemed particularly poignant today as we witness the horrific images of the war in Ukraine.

The Chief Executive expressed what an honour it was to witness the huge effort that takes place locally to fundraise and the detailed planning that takes place each year for the Armistice events in so many of our towns. She also expressed her pride in the residents of the borough who are so supportive of each of these causes.

The Chief Executive wished the Royal British Legion continued success and felt that there was no doubt that they would continue to thrive for the next 100 years and beyond and offered her heartfelt congratulations on this richly deserved honour.

The Mayor called on Councillor John Taylor on behalf of the Plaid Cymru Group. Councillor Taylor passed on the apologies of Councillor Mann for not being able to attend this evening and echoed the comments of the Mayor, Leader and Chief Executive. Councillor Taylor on behalf of the Plaid Cymru Group thanked the Royal British Legion for all that they do to support our ex-service men and women, for the help they provide to the Armed Forces Community, their charitable endeavours and for the amazing efforts they make every year in commemorating Armistice Day.

The Mayor then called on Councillor Kevin Etheridge on behalf of the Independents Group. Councillor Etheridge, on behalf of his Group, expressed his pride and privilege in being able to honour the Royal British Legion with this the highest award the Council can make.

To accept the Freedom of the Borough Award, the Mayor called on Mr Ken Terry, Wales Representative on the Royal British Legion's Membership Council.

Mr Terry as both a resident of Caerphilly County Borough and Wales Representative to the Royal British Legion expressed his pleasure in being able to receive such a prestigious honour on behalf of the Charity.

The RBL has a long-standing friendship and strong working relationship with Caerphilly County Borough Council, which has been truly commendable at ensuring local armed forces personnel, veterans and their families receive the support they need. Working together Caerphilly and the RBL have celebrated, commemorated and remembered the contribution of our armed forces in conflicts and in peace-keeping duties around the world.

Mr Terry explained that the Legion was formed in the aftermath of the most destructive war the world had ever seen and brought together four ex-servicemen's organisation under one umbrella. The very first Poppy Appeal back in November 1921 raised £106,000, which would equate to approximately £5.3m today. Since then, the Poppy Appeal has been an annual opportunity for communities to show their support.

The people of Caerphilly County Borough are incredible supporters of the armed forces communities and Mr Terry expressed his sincere thanks for their on-going support.

Council noted how over the last 100 years the Royal British Legion had reinforced their charitable aims of welfare, campaigning and remembrance. Nationally responding to around 100,000 requests every year and spending £1m every week on care, with each and everyone resulting in a life changing outcome for that individual or family. The last 2 years the RBL have

supported the nations response to Covid-19 by building nightingale hospitals, running vaccinations centres, supporting ambulance crews and maintaining the availability of PPE.

As the Royal British Legion approach their 101st Anniversary, it is under no illusions that their work is done, the charity will stand ready to continue to hold governments to account and to step in and support where there is a need worldwide and would continue to uphold remembrance as a social good that is relevant for all communities. The Charity stands ready and prepared for the challenges to come into the next one hundred years.

Mr Terry on behalf of the Royal British Legion thanked Caerphilly for this extremely prestigious honour.

The Mayor then invited Members who wished to comment to indicate and make representations.

Members echoed the comments made and thanked Mr Terry and his colleagues for attending and placed on record their thanks to volunteers who worked so tirelessly making collections and organising events. A Member also wished to place on record his thanks to the Council for taking on the marshalling of Remembrance Day Commemorations when Gwent Police stepped back. The Member also recognised the work done by the Council cleaning cenotaphs and preparing roads.

Mr. M. Jones MBE on behalf of the Royal British Legion, thanked Members for their kind words and offered an open invitation to all to attend the culminating event of the centenary celebrations being held in Waun Fawr Park on the 14th May 2022. This afternoon of music and celebration would include 'Beating the Retreat' by the Royal Welsh Guards.

Members expressed their immense pride at being present at this momentous occasion, honouring this incredible organisation and the exceptional work that it does, which had such resonance at this time with the war in Ukraine.

Councillors who were also Members of the Royal British Legion placed on record their thanks to the Council for recognising the work of the Legion and also recognised the sacrifice of the men and women in our armed forces. Members paid their respects to those that served and who are currently serving this country so bravely.

A Member expressed his personal pride in being able to visit troops in Afghanistan and advised Council of how serving personnel had spoken highly of the Royal British Legion. The Member referenced the work done by a friend Mrs Hilda Jenkins supporting our armed forces veterans and in memory of this he was delighted to play a part in honouring the Royal British Legion for all their sterling work throughout the entire county borough.

The Mayor in concluding proceedings formally announced that the Royal British Legion were admitted as Honorary Freeman of Caerphilly County Borough.

The meeting closed at 17:35pm

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 12th April 2022 they were signed by the Mayor.

MAYOR