



ANNUAL REPORT 2021

Cyngor Cymuned
PONTYCLUN
Community Council



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CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The past year will always be remembered as the year of Covid which has had a devastating effect on the social and economic activity of the Pontyclun community.

There has been democratic local government in our area since 1894 and our community has lived through wars and depressions. The impact of Covid stands alongside those major travails in our history as so much of our family, community, business and council activity suffered a sad hibernation. There have been deaths, long term illness, economic stagnation and social isolation. Whilst council activity has been curtailed, we have innovated and built on past innovations so that our council and community can re-emerge as the virus subsides. The Council has continued to function as staff have worked either in isolation or through digital connectivity. Council members have continued to meet each other and members of the public digitally.

The Council innovated in 2013 by creating Café 50 as a social hub for our older population. Sadly, Café 50 has largely been suspended along with the U3A which was initiated as a complement to Café 50. Nevertheless, the Council built on the foundations of Café 50 by putting in place a volunteer network to support residents who were isolated by Covid. Our thanks are given to the many volunteers and Cllr Margaret Griffiths who led the coordination. New doors have been provided to Café 50 as we prepare for its re-emergence.

Pontyclun Park was created by the Council in 2015. It has been a barometer of the virus. Each time the virus subsides the park buzzes with activity. It has become a core feature of the town centre and we must continue to invest in its attractiveness. The work of the Community Garden volunteers has led to Pontyclun Park's national designation as a 'Green Park'.

Pontyclun residents have responded to the virus by walking the beautiful paths of Pontyclun in numbers never seen before. The paths are maintained by the Community Council through an agency agreement with RCT Council. The Council has agreed that this agreement needs to be re-negotiated. As a complement to the public rights of way the Council owns publicly accessible land at Ivor Woods and along the Brynsadler riverside. In 2005 the Council innovated by being one of the first to produce walks leaflets with the published walks radiating from the town centre, encouraging walkers to use the town centre. In 2017 the decision was taken to re-publish these walks leaflets and the Ramblers

Association was asked to support the Council. It is a matter of regret that no leaflets have been available in the Covid period. The Council supports the Pontyclun Environment Group in its work of maintaining and enhancing our local environment.

In 2005 the Council innovated by investing in flower planters as its contribution to enhancing the attractiveness of the town centre. In the last year we have belatedly put in place a programme of maintenance and renovation of these planters. The Council has complemented the town centre planters with the installation of town centre picnic tables. The Council has decided to install benches in the town centre.

The Community Council works alongside RCT Council, Transport for Wales and the Environment Group in providing and maintaining litter bins and collecting litter. This is crucially important work. The sense of well-being in any community can be measured by the absence of litter. During the past year Community Council staff have filled a gap when RCT Council staff became diverted away from bin management. We thank our staff for this much appreciated extension of their role. Learning from this the Council might reflect on the need to better integrate its work with that of RCT Council and Transport for Wales in collecting litter and managing litter bins.

In 2017 the Council innovated by initiating a programme of Pontyclun Festivals. We have organised and supported summer festivals entitled 'Picnic in the Park', Christmas festivals of lights, music and local crafts; walking festivals; walking rugby festivals; a local planetarium; a walking rugby festival. So much of this activity has been suspended by Covid. An objective for the future must be to re-invent Pontyclun as a festival town. It is good for business. It is good for our community.

The Council has innovated in its celebration of local history. It has organised local history walks. It worked with RCT Council to install attractive local history boards in Pontyclun, Talygarn, Miskin and Groes Faen. It worked with the National Museum of Wales to install a digital history station in the local library. It has a history collection on its website. The Chair published a long series of local history contributions in 'The Diary'. It is developing a project to supplement this activity with the provision of local QR codes providing access to local histories.

In 2012 the Council innovated by creating, designing and maintaining a community website - one of the first in Wales. In the last year we have invested in a redesign of this website.

This year we have initiated a conversation with Pontyclun residents on the most appropriate use of land in our area: developing views on how we balance green spaces, mobility, economic activity, new homes, public services. The resulting Pontyclun Place Plan will influence our partners in RCT Council, the Local Health Board, Transport for Wales and Welsh Government.

In 1894 local councils were created to replace a system of autocratic local administration - central government appointed officials and 'quangocrats' imposing themselves on local communities. Locally elected councils were seen as the radical means by which local people and their elected representatives actively governed themselves. As we emerge from the ravages of Covid we will need to re-invent our local council, ensuring always that the energy of the community is harnessed by the energy of those who serve as their councillors, supported by our council staff. We have made a good start with our innovation of working groups in which councillors and residents together creatively develop ideas which are put to the Council for deliberation and decision.

We will need to continue our commitment to the working group structure and develop further our means of working with local people.

Paul Griffiths
Chair of Pontyclun Community Council 2020-21

COUNCIL SERVICES

The Council provides many local services and works with RCT CBC and Community groups to help support the community.

In particular we

- lease and manage the Car Park in Heol yr Orsaf.
- look after the War Memorial in Pontyclun and Remembrance plaques in Groesfaen.
- own and manage Pontyclun Park and the play facilities there.
- own and manage Ivor Woods and the land at the bottom of the Hollies.
- maintain the public footpaths in our community.
- lease, manage and run Café 50.
- Provide public conveniences in Heol yr Orsaf.
- Provide floral displays in many locations across our community.
- Arrange a number of Community Events including a Summer Picnic in the Park and a Christmas Festival
- Co-ordinate a number of Community Groups including a Dementia Support Group, Walking Rugby team, a weekly Quiz for the over 50s and a monthly Film Club.
- We provide Dog poo and normal waste bins around our community and also run a Crisp packet recycling scheme.

We are pleased to have obtained Bee Friendly status. This recognises the actions the Council has done to improve our environmental management of our open spaces in a manner which supports pollinators.

The Council is a Disability Confident - Committed employer and is a signatory to the Armed Forces Charter

HOW WE ORGANISE OURSELVES

The Council consists of 11 elected members, and we employ 1 full time and 5-part time staff.

The Council meets monthly at Café 50 and residents are welcome to attend and contribute to our meetings.

We have 4 working groups who consider the Council's plans and agree actions and priorities.

The **administration working group** (Convened by Councillor Paul Griffiths) discusses matters relating to how the Council runs itself with the aim to streamline how we operate and engage our residents.



The **Economy working group** (Convened by Councillor Gwyn Jackson) discusses how we can help promote Pontyclun and make it a place more people wish to live in and visit.

The **Environment working group** (convened by Councillor Martin Ashford) looks after our various open spaces, including Pontyclun Park and Ivor Woods.

The **Social & Cultural group** (Convened by Councillor Margaret Griffiths) aims to arrange events and activities to promote our wellbeing and to develop social events and a feeling of community.

This group also makes recommendations on Café 50.



CAFÉ 50

Whilst Café 50 had to temporarily close due to covid restrictions Covid it continues to develop and thrive.

Café 50 aims to be a welcoming social hub for anyone over the age of 50, by providing a range of activities and classes designed to enhance social interaction, learning new skills as well as provide support to those who need it.



It is normally open Monday to Friday with hot meals provided at lunchtime at affordable prices. This gives the more vulnerable and lonelier in our community the opportunity to enjoy a hot meal which socialising with like-minded individuals.

With Covid restrictions now lifting we are starting groups back and expecting lunches to start in September 21. There will be a great variety of groups from crafts to quizzes, games, and exercises to education and even a Film Club.

Groups wishing to use Café 50 should contact the Council Offices to see what spaces are available and any costs. Note groups focussing on over 50s can have space for free between 9am and 3pm Monday to Fridays (subject to availability)

SUPPORTING THE COMMUNITY

How can we help?

The Council is grateful to all the groups that organise events in our community, whether they be one off ones or regular occasions such as the bonfire night events at the Pontyclun Rugby Club. These all help to make the Pontyclun Community a great place to live. If you have a community event you wish us to list on our website/Facebook page, then please contact the Clerk.



Supporting Community Groups

The council allocates some of its budget each year to supporting local groups. This year we gave grants totalling £2500 for groups encompassing the full range of our residents from the youngest to our most senior.

In addition, we publicise events by displaying posters & articles on our noticeboards, website and Facebook pages and give help and advice where we can.

The Council has allocated a further £2500 towards grant support for the 2021-22 financial year and details of how to apply can be found on our website, Pontyclun.net

Volunteers and Placements

The Council works with organisations to help people looking for a way back to work by offering workplace placements.

In addition, we work with local volunteers to help improve our community through a number of projects.

Looking forward

The uncertainty caused by the COVID 19 disease and restrictions imposed meant that it was difficult to plan for 2020-21.

We had to cancel Picnic in the Park and the Christmas festival, though we were able to run a Community Treasure hunt at Easter 2021.

We are working with the Ramblers to launch a number of community walking routes around Pontyclun and are investigating options for additional parking, improving local facilities, and promoting Pontyclun and our Community.

“We believe all residents, businesses, staff and visitors of Pontyclun should have the opportunity to make the best of their lives.

The Council is here to help facilitate those opportunities now and into the future.”

We would be delighted to hear from members of the Community about things that they would like to see and from local businesses who would like to help, and support develop our community.

Our Supporters

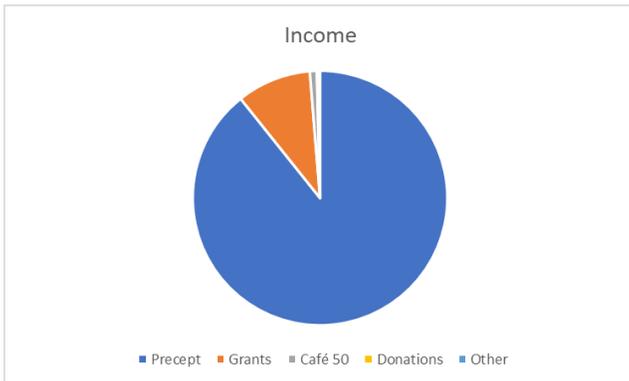
The following local organisations have given financial support towards events or the running of the Council over the last few years -

- The Community Shop
- Hapi Project
- Taf Ely Primary Care Cluster
- U3A
- Café 50 Tuesday Quizzers
- Spar
- Tesco
- Co-op
- Full Stop Law

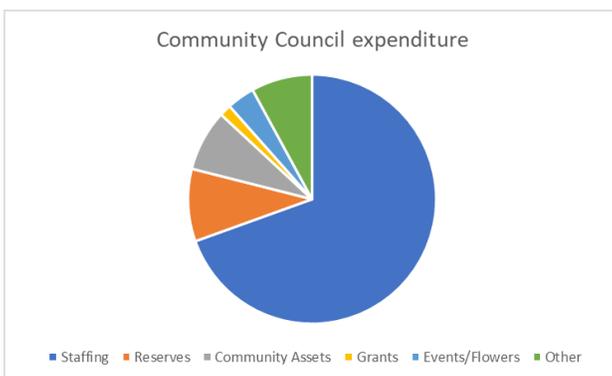
OUR FINANCES

Funding the Council

The Council is mainly funded by a precept on local residents. The precept for 2020-21 was £122.1k,



In addition, we normally raise funds by seeking grants, donations and the hire of Café 50. This was all significantly affected in 2020-21 and the proportion of our income from these sources fell this year. The Council is also pleased to acknowledge the kind support of local businesses who have supported us by making donations towards events or the running of Café 50.



Overall whilst we planned for a balanced budget the reduced income from covid, and our use of the lockdown time to make some changes to Cafe50, the Community Christmas decorations and the flower planters meant that we spent about £5k more than we received. This was funded from our reserve funds.

ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

The Council works with residents and local groups to help support the local environment. These include:-

Pontyclun Environment Group

This is a group of residents whose activities have included:

- Establishing and maintaining the riverside walk along the River Ely from Brynsadler to Pontyclun on land leased by the Community Council.
- Managing the containment of knotweed and balsam along the riverside with the effect of widening the biodiversity of the area
- Working with Llais y Goedwig to optimise the health of the woodland areas on the land leased from the Community Council optimising trees, plants, birds and animal species.
- Coordinating the input of volunteer residents in undertaking litter picks.
- Organising local walks with the county ecologist so that residents can better understand and appreciate the diversity of the local eco-systems.

Pontyclun Community Garden

Pontyclun Community Garden is a group of volunteer residents who have established and maintained a community garden within the Pontyclun Park which is provided by Pontyclun Community Council.

The Community Garden includes

- Insect friendly flowers and vegetables
- Bug hotel
- Bee's nest
- Composting

Refill Pontyclun

Pontyclun school children made agreements with local retailers that tap water will be provided to children bringing their own bottles. The effect is to reduce the use of plastic and reduce the littering of plastic bottles.

The Community Council formalised these arrangements through the launch of a "Refill Pontyclun" scheme. This scheme currently has 21 local businesses as members.

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

The Community Council seeks to support and work closely with Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council. RCT Council has innovated in the development of a grass cutting and collecting machine which allows vegetation a long growing season before it is cut and collected so as to foster local eco-systems and encourage greater biodiversity.

Pontyclun Community Council worked with RCT Council to identify and reserve sites for this 'hay cut' regime. The sites include:

- A half-acre of land along the perimeter of Pontyclun Park which is owned by the Community Council.
- 5 acres of land on the top end of the cycle path which runs from Pontyclun Railway Station to the A473
- 20 acres of land enclosed by Ffordd Cefn yr Hendy.
- Land in on Cowbridge Road, Talygarn and by the motorway Talygarn Drive

Groesfaen Gwyrdd

- We supported this new volunteer led organisation in Groesfaen to set up and start activities in 2020.
- Their purpose is to make Groesfaen a better place to live by taking action to improve the environment and encourage local participation.
- We supported them to acquire a "Pollinator Garden" under the Local Places for Nature scheme and also to plant a number of Pollinator friendly bushes on local waste land.

Pontyclun Community Council actions

Pontyclun Community Council owns and maintains 5 acres of woodland at Ivor Woods. Its woodland management is intended to increase biodiversity and local eco-systems. Where safe, fallen branches and trees are left 'in-situ' or cut branches are placed in piles to encourage wildlife.

The Community Council, as an agent of RCT Council, maintains 20 miles of public right of ways.

Our floral displays specifically use "Pollinator friendly" flowers in our hanging baskets.

The Community Council has a 'bee friendly' designation.

To encourage recycling the Council runs a Crisp packet recycling scheme in the Community with drop off locations at Café 50 and the Pontyclun Library.

With regards to its administration, paper purchased for use in the Office is PEFC certified from sustainably managed forests and controlled sources. It is also Chlorine free. We also replace light bulbs with LED ones when then need changing and recently replaced the bulk of the lighting in Café 50 with LED lights, reducing the number of light bulbs by nearly 60 during the process.

The Council seeks to promote and encourage biodiversity and habitats for pollinators and insects. To do this we

1. Since 2017 we have operated a Hay cut regime in a section of our park
2. In 2020 we also started to leave the area of ground to the side of Café 50 in Pontyclun uncut
3. In 2020 we also started to leave an area of ground at the Hollies uncut.
4. In 2019 we were asked by residents to look at installing additional fencing/gates at the park and as a result we planted a new section of hedging at the park boundary (rather than metal or wooden fencing)
5. In 2020 we signed up to the Hedgehog Heroes scheme

CONTACT US

You can contact the Council by



Telephone 01443 238500



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E mail Clerk@pontyclun-cc.gov.wales



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Website www.pontyclun.net



Caru Gwenyn
Bee Friendly

