

Finance Governance and Personnel Committee Meeting

Wednesday 15th July 2020

This meeting was held via video conference under the Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Meetings) (Wales) 2020

Present: Cllrs David Owens (Chair), Linda Edwards, Peter Freeman, John Hedley Jones, Andrew Phillips, Hugh Shepardson, Bob Walpole

In attendance: Cllrs Karen Morris, Moira Thomas

Officers: Huw Thomas (RFO)

Minute taker: Ed Davies (Administrative Assistant)

10.30am – 12.47pm

1. To receive apologies for absence

No apologies had been received.

2. To receive members' declarations of interest

None

3. To confirm the minutes of the Finance, Governance and Personnel Committee meeting held on Monday 15th June 2020

Copies of the minutes had been circulated in advance of the meeting. It was proposed by Cllr Hugh Shepardson and seconded by Cllr John Hedley Jones that the minutes of the meeting be approved as a true record. All members were in agreement.

4. To consider any matters arising from the minutes

item 8 "payments to members of Community and Town Councils"

Members noted that their recommendation had been approved at the Ordinary Meeting of the Town Council. The Clerk and RFO stated that the allowance payment to the Mayor had been arranged and would form a part of the next payroll sequence.

Item 11 "Capital programme committee"

Members noted that this proposal had not been ratified at the Ordinary Meeting of the Town Council, which would continue with its existing structure.

5. To consider the budget monitoring report

The budget monitoring reports for all Committees had previously been circulated. The Clerk went through the report with members, identifying any exceptions. He asked members to note the new

Chair *David Owens*

format he had created in response to a request for more detail, and for feedback or questions to be sent to him. The format excluded commercially sensitive information, and members could request more detail during the in camera session.

The format showed spending the information for the current month and the right showed the accumulative figures, which allowed members tighter control. The “variance to budget” columns showed the difference between the relative “actual” and “budget” columns preceding it, where the figure was in parenthesis, it was shown as a negative difference.

The exceptions highlighted by the Clerk and RFO were as follows:

- Facilities and Assets budget - under Cemetery - General Maintenance, £840 had been spent on equipment for PPE and signage to enable the Council to meet its responsibilities in relation to the Covid 19 pandemic. He confirmed that he was pursuing lines of enquiry to establish if any financial assistance would be available to help meet those costs.
- Facilities and Assets budget – the Chair asked members to note that in relation to the Bowls Club income, he and the Chair of the Facilities and Assets Committee along with the Clerk and Cemetery and Facilities Superintendent were meeting to discuss their financial situation at 2pm on 15th July.
- Finance, Governance and Personnel Committee – the largest expenditure was on salaries and on expenses, but that this came to a total of 13.11% of its annual budget,
- Regeneration and Community Engagement Committee – the most significant expenditure was related to the storage of Christmas lighting which was well within the annual budget.

In closing he stated that the net operational expenditure was at 11.75% which was 5 points under budget and invited members to contact him with any queries or observations on the format or content.

Many members expressed their satisfaction with the new format. A brief discussion was had in relation to income, which was noted as being low, due to the current pandemic restrictions. It was therefore unlikely for the targets to be met as a result, although members wished to discuss if a date had been set for the opening up of facilities for hire again.

The Clerk advised that there had been some enquiries, particularly in relation to Burry Port facilities, with one having already produced a Risk Assessment for consideration. He stated that the national restrictions on hire of facilities was due to be lifted on 20th July but that a decision was required by the Council on their own route to enable that. Members had points to discuss in camera on this topic and so discussion ended at this point.

Cllr Peter Freeman proposed that the report be accepted, seconded by Cllr Linda Edwards and was agreed unanimously by the committee.

6. Update on asset transfers

The Clerk advised that although the paperwork had now been transferred to the new solicitor, they were currently on annual leave and so he had scheduled a phone meeting with them on Monday 20th July.

Members discussed the ongoing Copperworks sale, discussing if the ongoing delays provided the Council an opportunity to reassess its position to identify if it was getting the best price possible in the interests of the ratepayers. They requested that the Clerk draw together the available information

that the Council had on the matter, including the purchaser's plans, to allow a discussion at a future meeting

ACTION: Clerk

The Clerk advised members that the bills for the work at Pembrey AFC pitches were now arriving at the office, indicating that the process had worked. These would be paid out of General Reserves for the time-being with an agreement with CCC to recoup the costs on submission of evidence of the paid invoices.

Members noted the high quality of the work done so far and discussed the need for an official opening working with CCC to arrange it, perhaps with the Mayor. They asked the Clerk to make enquiries on the matter.

ACTION: Clerk

The Clerk advised that in relation to the land for the Growing Association, the final lease would not be signed until there was an agreement in place with the Association.

Cllr Peter Freeman declared an interest as he was a current plot holder with the association.

Members discussed why the CFS had recently approached the leaseholder on locating polytunnels on the site. It was noted that this was in relation to the creation of a horticulture apprenticeship with the Council and to try and reduce flower costs for the Council. As yet, no decision had yet been taken as to their final location. Members noted that the leaseholder had indicated that the Association would be happy to work with the Council on the issue, but their preference would not be for the polytunnels to be located there. The Clerk was asked to investigate the matter and report back in due course, as a complete plan should be in place before action was taken.

ACTION: Clerk

7. Update on risk assessment

The Clerk had revisited a previous Risk Assessment taken in 2017/18 which provided the basis for this Committees needs. He would be updating and reformatting it for them to consider at the next meeting. He confirmed that it had been drawn up to meet the Auditor General's specific requirements for the Annual Return of that year, but that those changed annually hence why it had not been updated.

8. Update on apprenticeship employment

Members were informed that the current situation regarding the pandemic had put this matter on hold until Coleg Sir Gâr were able to host the education aspect of the apprenticeship. They noted that the advert had been recently been put out and it would be possible to interview and appoint soon.

In relation to a request to for the Council to explore additional apprenticeships in areas such as community engagements, the CDO was also looking at options around traineeship, for consideration in September. The difference was that a traineeship allowed a 6 month appointment, which could be followed by an apprenticeship or employment for the right candidates. The Clerk stated that the financial support on offer from the Government was not as good as had been hoped as it only covered the education part.

Members noted that a meeting may be required during August to have everything in place for September, which would be considered if necessary. They also noted that the Council was fortunate to have a qualified member of staff to allow them to host a horticulture apprenticeship.

9. Consideration of capital expenditure

In line with the decision taken at Council, this Committee would consider matters related to its delegated authority in relation to the capital expenditure in due course. Members requested an update from the Clerk in relation to the works to the floor in the Memorial Institute.

He gave the figures for the work to be done and stated that the question for members to consider was whether or not to approve the payment as the work had already been approved elsewhere. Members discussed the nature of the work for information.

Cllr Hugh Shepardson **PROPOSED** that the Committee approve the payment from the General Reserves pending a future decision on how the Capital Expenditure programme is financed, seconded by Cllr Linda Edwards.

Members agreed unanimously to the proposal and **RESOLVED** accordingly.

ACTION: Clerk

Members noted that the programme was intended to identify what was needed to make Council facilities better able to support additional community services and for refurbishing facilities in general due to historic lack of investment. It was noted that to date fire regulations had been given priority as had the works to the Memorial Institute floor and upstairs room.

The Clerk confirmed that a significant amount of the fire regulations work had been done, but that some would be tackled as part of the other works, to prevent having to re-do those elements, such as new fire door installation, when other project works take place. He confirmed that until the funding structure was established the works would have to be paid from reserves for the time-being.

10. Any other urgent matters at the discretion of the Chair

The Clerk wished to have guidance from the Committee in relation to the costs of utilities. He advised that at present prices were fluctuating and that their broker was currently trying to offer them long term deals, while the prices were at the bottom of the curve. There was some time remaining on the existing deal and he wished to know if the Committee would like him to look at the options in greater detail. The Committee **AGREED** unanimously for the Clerk to make a comparison study of the existing deal versus the current market.

ACTION: Clerk

Members also requested that the Clerk investigate with other officers, the available grants for insulation to existing facilities to further reduce energy costs.

ACTION: Clerk

Members were asked to discuss a matter regarding a local resident, an elderly woman who due to the current restrictions had been unable to maintain her garden, which was restricting her access. Without a decision from a Committee, the Clerk couldn't authorise any work to assist her and enquiries with the County Council had shown they weren't able to assist her.

Members discussed the matter noting concern that if they do this task for one, they may have difficulty refusing others asking for the same assistance. It was confirmed that there were no relatives able to help tackle the problem. It was noted that the person was in the at risk category which may influence any decision. Members **AGREED** unanimously for the matter to be referred to the Regeneration and Community Engagement Committee in the first instance.

ACTION: Ref to Regen

Members suggested avenues of enquiry including approaching charities to do the work, or for Councillors to work with the Community to find a solution.

In relation to how the work of the Council was being undertaken, some members commented that they were pleased with the way the Council was now running under the new Clerk, with members setting the agenda, officers informing the committees to allow decisions. Officers were thanked for their work.

It was **PROPOSED** by Cllr John Hedley Jones and seconded by Cllr Linda Edwards that the meeting move into camera. All members were in agreement.

In camera - That under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and representatives of the press be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

11. To confirm the confidential minutes of the meeting held on Monday 15th June 2020

It was proposed by Cllr Hugh Shepardson and seconded by Cllr Peter Freeman that the minutes of the meeting be approved as a true record. All members were in agreement.

12. Matters Arising

Members discussed matters in relation to a payment to a person.

Ed Davies left the meeting at 11.29am

13. Consideration of the Schedule of Accounts

The schedule of accounts had previously been circulated and was discussed. Cllr John Hedley Jones proposed this document be accepted, seconded by Cllr Linda Edwards. All members in favour of accepting.

14. Consideration of outstanding invoices

A document showing outstanding invoices had been circulated prior to the meeting and was discussed.

15. Update on staffing issues

Staffing matters were discussed.

The meeting ended at 12.50pm.

Chair
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