

PUBLIC Minutes of Pembrey and Burry Port Town Council

Finance Governance and Personnel Committee Meeting

Wednesday 13th August 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 and Michael Theodoulou

Officers: Huw Thomas (Clerk/RFO), Shan Loudon (Deputy Clerk)

1pm – 2.45pm

1. To receive apologies for absence

None had been received.

2. To receive members' declarations of interest

None were made.

3. To confirm the minutes of the Finance, Governance and personnel meetings held on Wednesday 15th July and Monday 27th July 2020

Cllr Andrew Phillips **PROPOSED**, seconded by Cllr Bob Walpole for the minutes of the 15th July to be approved as accurate. **RESOLVED**

Cllr Hugh Shepardson **PROPOSED**, seconded by Cllr Linda Edwards for the minutes of the 27th July to be approved as accurate.

In the ensuing vote 6 members voted in favour with 0 against and 1 abstention. The committee therefore **RESOLVED** to accept the minutes. The abstention was due to not being present at the meeting.

4. To consider any matters arising from the minutes

None were raised.

5. Consideration of the budget monitoring report

Copies of the report had been distributed in advance of the meeting. The Clerk and RFO guided members through the main exceptions for noting, across each Committee's budget, as follows:

Chair *D M Owens*

2020

Facilities and Assets Committee

Because staff had been needed elsewhere on other high priority tasks, the grave digging at the cemetery had almost entirely been undertaken by a contractor, resulting in higher costs.

Members asked Facilities to consider this issue when setting their budget for the following year.

ACTION: Ref to Facilities and Assets Cmte

General Maintenance – the costs of the Chapel of Rest refurbishment had been allocated to this budget, and as this work was close to completion, costs were unlikely to increase much further.

Halls and Institute maintenance and repair – he stated that some of these costs had been accrued in last years accounts and so would reverse out in due course. There was also a single item for a structural survey report.

The bottom line showed the budget was overall underspent at 17%. There were a number of items not yet progressed which would catch this up to targets.

Finance, Governance and Personnel Committee

One exceptional item was the annual insurance bill, which implied the Committee was overbudget but this item would balance out over the year.

Regeneration and Community Engagement Committee

Many of the headings for this budget were underspent, but this was by design to allow for reallocation in due course if necessary.

Members proceeded to discuss the budget revision.

The Clerk and RFO advised that following the Facilities and Assets meeting this morning, their largest issue was loss of income which may change the spending pattern for the rest of the year.

In relation to Capital works and major projects, member noted that although the Council had approved to take out a loan, it could not act without a firm plan for its spending.

Members were advised to expect a special meeting of this Committee to discuss this topic further, once the other Committees had met to discuss it. It was noted that the Regeneration and Community Engagement Committee had arranged their meeting for Wednesday 19th August.

6. Consideration of 2020-21 budget revision

Members noted that this item had already been addressed during the previous item.

7. Update on asset transfers

The Clerk reported that the solicitors had been working hard on the transfers. He reported that as the Council had approached this firm to deal with the transfer of the Station Toilets, that process was now almost complete and the Council had money budgeted to start the work as soon as that paperwork was signed. Members noted that the Projects Manager would need to review the quotes and update prices if necessary.

In relation to the strip of land at Pembrey Memorial Hall, the owner had requested that the Council share the cost of an independent valuation prior to discussions on sale. Members noted their

previous discussions on the subject, including access to that land and the previously agreed limit to which the Council was prepared to spend on the matter.

Cllr John Hedley Jones **PROPOSED**, seconded by Cllr Andrew Phillips to approve the shared cost of the valuation with the owner.

Members **AGREED** unanimously to the proposal.

ACTION: RFO

The Clerk stated that the Council was now in a position progress with the S106 money for the Pembrey AFC pitch with the sub-lease ready to be signed. He also informed members that the paperwork for the Harbourside Playground needed its final signature.

8. **Update on capital expenditure programme**

No requests had been submitted by other Committees on this matter yet. The Clerk was reminded to make it clear to the Committees what works applied to capital expenditure, when the topic was raised.

9. **Update on report on copperworks negotiations**

Members referred to the previously distributed documents which showed the information that had driven the decision-making process while appointing the estate agents for this sale. It was noted that the agents who gave the highest market valuation had been chosen, while costings had also been sought for potential uses of the site. It was noted that the final agreed sale price was significantly higher than that valuation.

Members discussed some information about the buyer and their intentions, and possible reasons for their acceptance of the delays. Following this there were no objections to continuing the process.

10. **Update on office accommodation**

Members noted that following the decision by the Facilities and Assets Committee earlier in the day to proceed with the renovation work to the upstairs room of the Memorial Institute but with no firm commitment on its intended use, this item would have to be deferred.

Members noted that with people returning to work as restrictions were lifted, the Council needed to be certain it had sufficient office space in the short term. It was also noted that once the work was complete to the upstairs the Council would have use of the building until such a time as the chosen option was implemented.

Members requested that the Clerk and RFO provide them with a detailed proposal of how staff would be accommodated as they returned to the building.

ACTION: Clerk and RFO

11. **To consider the development of a model protocol to cover Councillors from acting without authorisation**

Members were informed that at present there was no protocol to advise or guide Councillors when meeting with officials or representatives of other bodies, on what conduct was appropriate and what would be construed as acting on behalf of the Council and acting as an individual.

Members noted that this had followed a meeting between two members with representatives of an outside body. While the Clerk and others were satisfied that no regulation or standing order had been breached, this was in part because, one that covered these circumstances was not yet in place.

There was strong feeling among members that no member should arrange for or otherwise meet with representatives of outside bodies, without clear involvement of the Clerk or having approval via either the full Council or an appropriate Council Committee, or, at the very least having notified all members of their intentions.

Members discussed whether the issue of a Councillor acting to represent their community without Town Council knowledge or involvement was covered by the Council's Communication Policy.

Members also raised concerns about possible ways in which information discussed in camera had potentially been made known to individuals outside of the Council. Members were clear that no accusation was being made against any member or group within the Council, only that they would need to remain vigilant to this issue.

Members **AGREED** to request the Clerk draft a protocol for this agenda topic for them to consider at a future meeting.

ACTION: Clerk

12. Any referred matters from other Committees

There were none.

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

There were none.

Cllr Andrew Phillips **PROPOSED**, seconded by Cllr Peter Freeman, for the meeting to proceed in camera.

Members **RESOLVED** unanimously to the proposal.

14.06 Ed Davies left the meeting

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.

14. To confirm the minutes of the Finance, Governance and Personnel meetings held on Wednesday 15th July and Monday 27th July 2020

The minutes of the above meetings were approved.

Chair *Dr Owens*

2020

15. To consider the schedule of accounts

After discussion, it was proposed by Cllr John Hedley Jones and seconded by Peter Freeman that the schedule of accounts be approved.

15. Update on staffing issues

A number of issues were discussed.