

(PUBLIC) Minutes of Pembrey and Burry Port Town Council

Finance Governance and Personnel Committee Meeting

Wednesday 8th December 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 (2.35pm), John Hedley Jones, Andrew Phillips, Hugh Shepardson, Bob Walpole

In attendance: Cllr Michael Theodoulou

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

Minute taker: Ed Davies (Administrative Assistant)

2pm – 3.10pm

1. To receive apologies for absence

All members were present.

2. To receive members' declarations of interest

None were made.

3. To confirm the minutes of the Finance, Governance and Personnel meetings held on Tuesday 10th November 2020

Cllr Hugh Shepardson **PROPOSED**, seconded by Cllr Linda Edwards that the minutes were an accurate record of the meeting. **RESOLVED**.

4. To consider any matters arising from the minutes

None were raised.

5. Consideration of budget monitoring report

The Clerk/RFO guided members through the report with the following highlights.

Facilities and Assets

There was no income at present due to the ongoing restrictions.

Cemetery General Maintenance costs were related to the previously approved container.

Cemetery equipment was for the repair of strimmers.

Memorial Hall and Institute cleaning costs – This was where the costs for the temporary toilets at the harbour were being collected for now.

Memorial Hall maintenance and repair costs was for the other previously approved container.

Memorial Institute maintenance and repair was for the scaffolding to repair the pointing on the building.

Copperworks – this was the standing water charge for this property.

Pembrey Memorial Hall oil – this was a credit due to an incorrect cheque being issued.

Pembrey Memorial Hall maintenance charges were related to pest control works.

Remembrance Gardens charges were for the installation of the new electricity pillar supply.

In total the Facilities and Assets budget was at 58.7% which was about on target.

He added that the costs for the work at Pembrey AFC had been gathered in this budget which would eventually be covered by the Section 106 funding. In response to a query, he confirmed that all of the costs were planned items rather than emergency items.

Finance, Governance and Personnel

Members were reminded that the only exception was the employee costs which was because the council had not ended up with the structure it had budgeted for.

Members noted that the budget total was at 62% but that included the annual insurance charge. He highlighted that as no election costs would be generated in this financial year, it was hoped this could drop in to reserves.

In response to a query he confirmed that members had approved the necessary policy to ensure the payment of members allowances at the end of the year.

Regeneration and Community Engagement

Christmas lights and competition - part payment for the lights had been made.

Local donations – a donation had been made to the Marie Curie fund.

Community Events budget – this was a credit as this is where the community support costs were being collected and now having moved it appeared as a credit.

At present the budget was at 45% and so below its target, however the Council had decided to adjust the budget to include an income during the 4th quarter which now looked unlikely.

Members thanked the Clerk/RFO for the report and it was accepted.

6. Update on asset transfers

Members noted the progress on the sale of Copperworks, and that the remaining obstacle was for the Section 106 agreement. It was noted that the Facilities and Assets Committee had resolved not to impose a deadline on the sale as previously instructed.

Members had a discussion about duplication of work at meetings, with members noting a difference between an update and a decision request.

The Clerk also updated members on the resolution to contact the Auditor General, confirming that they had been reluctant to express an opinion as they would only do an audit of the transaction to see if that complied with the regulations. He would enquire with One Voice Wales for advice.

There was also confirmation that the transfer of Pembrey Hall and lands was close to completion.

Due to recent and persistent vandalism of the Station Toilets creating additional expenses, the Clerk/RFO stated his intention to ask the solicitor to move their focus to that asset transfer next so the planned improvements could go ahead.

7. Consideration of 2021/22 budget

The Clerk/RFO guided members through the draft budget. Members noted that they could only ask other committees to revisit their drafts to make changes and not instruct them. This Committee could consider the overall budget and ask committees to aim for a particular precept increase.

The Clerk reminded members that the Auditor General only viewed precept increases of over 15% as requiring special explanation. Members were of the opinion that a precept increase of 10% or less would be preferable.

Members noted that there was no information yet available on the precept being set by the County Council for the 21/22 financial year.

Members discussed whether it was possible to find out if there was confirmation of how the recent house building would impact the precept as more houses would mean a larger precept.

Facilities and Assets

Following his meeting with staff the Clerk had managed to put in additional detail including recurring costs. This however had created a huge potential budget that is unlikely to be accepted by the Council.

Members noted that there was no budgeted income, which members felt could be altered given recent good news concerning Covid-19 vaccines. Members were **AGREED** to ask Facilities and Assets to review this item of their budget.

ACTION: Ref to Facilities

Members noted that the Public Works Loan interest repayment was based on the full amount being drawn out at once, whereas it would be drawn down in stages. The Clerk/RFO advised that this could be adjusted especially if the sale of Copperworks completed soon as less money would need to be drawn down in the first instance. He confirmed that the schedule of drawing down was being built into the business plan for submission, and would be used to inform the draft budget

Cllr Peter Freeman joined the meeting at 2.35pm

Members noted that the budget would need to be confirmed by the end of January and that the Facilities and Assets next scheduled meeting was at the start of that month. It was felt that it may be necessary for them to have a special meeting sooner.

Finance, Governance and Personnel

Members noted that the majority of the budget was taken up by operational costs and other fixed items.

It was queried whether or not election costs could be assessed, as the only planned elections were for the Senedd.

Regeneration and Community Engagement

Members noted that the increases in this budget were tied to providing community support, and that there would be a great need for that in the coming year.

In closing the Chair asked members to be ready to convene for an additional special meeting if needs be.

ACTION: Clerk/RFO

8. Consideration of the ongoing remit of the internal auditor

Members noted that although it was not a legal obligation to have a meeting with the internal auditor at the 6-month mark, it was good practice.

Members discussed this possibility and the forthcoming changes to auditing practices in Wales.

Members **AGREED** to instruct the Clerk to request a meeting in January with the Auditor and to prepare the paperwork necessary for that meeting.

Action: Clerk/RFO

9. Any referred matters from other Committees

None had been sent.

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

None were raised.

Cllr Hugh Shepardson **PROPOSED**, seconded by Cllr John Hedley Jones for the meeting to move to in camera. **RESOLVED**

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 minutes of the Finance, Governance and Personnel meetings held on Tuesday 10th November 2020

Cllr John Hedley Jones **PROPOSED**, seconded by Cllr Linda Edwards that the minutes were an accurate record of the meeting. **RESOLVED.**

12. Matters arising

Members noted an update on a previously outstanding invoice.

13. To consider schedule of accounts

Members noted the schedule of accounts.

14. Consideration of outstanding invoices.

Members noted that there were none.

15. Consideration of Christmas office cover.

Members noted the position of the Clerk/RFO and stated that it was his prerogative in this matter.

Ed Davies left the meeting at 3pm

16. Update on staffing issues.

Members discussed staffing issues.

Meeting ended 3.10pm.