

**(PUBLIC) Minutes of Pembrey and Burry Port Town Council**

**Finance Governance and Personnel Committee Meeting**

**Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> March 2021**

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

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

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

**Minute taker: Ed Davies (Administrative Assistant)**

2pm – 4pm

**1. To receive apologies for absence**

Apologies had been received from Cllr John Hedley Jones.

**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 9<sup>th</sup> February 2021.**

Cllr Bob Walpole **PROPOSED**, seconded by Cllr Andrew Phillips 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 by exception and by Committee.

**Facilities**

The Clerk/RFO informed members that having started putting together a schedule on income vs expenditure in relation to the Places for Nature grant, it had become apparent that due to the delay in reporting, it would not be a useful document until the next meeting of this Committee. In addition, it was noted that an extension relating to expenditure had been granted up to June for this grant.

Members speculated that such a document would probably be most useful on a quarterly or half yearly basis.

The Clerk/RFO reminded members that the variance on salaries remained as the structure budgeted for was not the one currently in place.

The heating costs were reported in this month, which made it appear over budget. However, the year to date figure showed that the budget was on target.

In total the budget was at 86%, in part caused by the spending on the pitch for Pembrey AFC, which the Clerk/RFO hoped would be aligned before the end of the financial year, on receipt of the Section 106 money.

He also warned members that March tended to be a month with high expenditure as a number of accrued costs not yet paid are incurred in that month. His prediction was that this would result in the budget ending broadly flat by the end of the year.

#### Finance, Governance and Personnel

The Clerk/RFO highlighted that the salaries structure in place differed from that which had been budgeted for and so there would be a variance at the end of the year.

Telephone costs had been paid for which showed it over budget however the year-to-date figure showed that the overall budget was at the expected percentage.

The Clerk/RFO highlighted that the Stationery and Charges budget expenditure was high because the Meals on Wheels takings resulted in more cash being handled and therefore an increase in bank charges. He anticipated that a move to more electronic payments being accepted would see a significant change in the expenditure of this budget.

The Clerk/RFO stated that as there had been no election costs in this financial year it gave the Council some headroom to make up for their salary exceptions.

The expenditure on the Mayoral donations had been incurred by the raffle.

Members discussed the need to remind the Mayor to nominate her charities in due course, and some additional matters relating to her tenure and the difficulties she has faced.

Action: Clerk/RFO

#### Regeneration and Community Engagement

The Clerk/RFO stated that the income shown was from the Community Resilience grant and the takings from the Meals on Wheels. He stated that the grant money would be spent while the aim of the Meals on Wheels scheme was to break even.

The expenditure under Community Support was from the grant as mentioned above.

Members requested that the Clerk/RFO and Deputy Clerk make sure that the issue of Christmas lighting be added to the relevant agenda at the appropriate time as there would need to be a decision made on extending the lighting as previously agreed to.

Overall the budget for this Committee was at 68.9% and the Clerk/RFO was confident that it would remain at about that level for the rest of the year.

#### Totals

The overall budget stood at 77% with some accruals to account for in March as previously stated.

Members queried whether or not it was appropriate to remove a potential personal reference under one of the budget headings as it may accidentally provide the public with personal information. The Clerk/RFO **AGREED** to replace the term with “staffing costs”.

**ACTION: Clerk/RFO**

## **6. Update on asset transfers**

The Clerk/RFO informed members of the following asset transfers:

### Copperworks

The boundary plans to be used had been agreed on and the purchaser had requested supervised access to the building recently which showed positive action from both sides.

### Pembrey Assets

Following a recent visit with the solicitor he had signed the engagement letters for the various transfers taking place at Pembrey Memorial Hall and so he expected some movement on those soon.

He advised that having received a copy of the original lease agreement between Pembrey Community Growing Association (PCGA) and the County Council, he would be working with the CFS to ensure that all of the terminology and sections were appropriate, before taking the document to the Facilities and Assets Committee for approval.

Cllr Peter Freeman declared an interest as a member of the PCGA.

Members requested that the Clerk/RFO also contact the PCGA to discuss any planned changes and involve them in the process.

**ACTION: Clerk/RFO**

It was confirmed to members that the new polytunnel was being put on the piece of land to the north-east of the Memorial Hall in Pembrey, who then requested that the Clerk/RFO confirm with the planning department of the County Council as to whether planning permission would be required or not.

**ACTION: Clerk/RFO**

### Pembrey Football Pitch

Members were advised that the insurance confirmation was to be sent out and the agreement would be ready to sign shortly after. They also heard that the Club were holding on paying for the new lighting until they had inspected the units which was not possible during lockdown.

Cllr David Owens declared an interest as a family member was involved with the football club.

Cllr Linda Edwards took over as Chair for the remainder of this item 2.22pm.

The Clerk/RFO confirmed that the club had spent £19,000 which will be covered when the Section 106 Funding is recorded at the Financial Year End.

Cllr David Owens returned as Chair of the meeting 2.24pm

## **7. Update on working arrangements**

The Clerk/RFO confirmed that there were no updates to working arrangements as the lockdown situation had not changed. Staff were spread out throughout Council facilities to reduce the numbers in each room with some staff working from home on occasion also. It was noted that the office spaces had been adequately heated during the winter months.

## 8. Consideration of updated Financial Regulations

Members were guided through the updated document which highlighted the suggested changes. These changes had been created via a process of comparing the current regulations ratified by the Council at the last Annual Meeting to the model regulations provided by One Voice Wales. It was noted that the Committee would consider these changes before the final draft was sent to the Ordinary Meeting/Annual Meeting for approval.

Point 3.2 and 3.4 – this related to the production of a three year forecast. The Clerk/RFO stated that he believed it would be beneficial to include the need for such a document in the regulations to allow for better future planning. Members noted that once the regulations were approved in May it would be necessary for each Committee to consider their input for the production of this document.

Members **AGREED** for the change to be included.

Page 7 (Point 4)

Members **AGREED** for the points which referenced the Mayor in this section be kept out of the regulations, as the role was largely ceremonial.

Members had an in-depth discussion of the role of the Chairs Committee in this process. All members expressed their reservations about that Committee assuming and reviewing the Standing Orders and Financial Regulations and having effective oversight of their work.

The Clerk/RFO when asked for advice reminded members that the Chairs Committee had been formed during the time when there had been no Clerk and that it should not have any decision making authority. However, their terms of reference did give them the responsibility over the Financial Regulations and Standing Orders documents. It was also noted that there were ongoing efforts to reduce the number of meetings and the consequent work they generated.

The Chair and Vice Chair stated that they would raise these concerns at the next meeting of the Chairs Committee.

Point 4.11 (Page 8) – the Clerk/RFO advised that he had highlighted this item for change as at present the rules stated he had to produce a written statement to justify every spend which was over budget by 15% or £100 across the nine reportable categories. He stated that in some budgets which were paid annually or quarterly, it resulted in a large number of items which would be considered over budget for that months report and so requiring a written statement.

Members **AGREED** for the “or £100” to be removed from this point.

Point 6.4 – members **AGREED** to remove the reference to “under normal circumstances” in relation to cheque signatories as the current wording could result in potential conflicts of interest.

Point 6.18 – in relation to the use by staff of their personal credit or debit accounts to purchase goods or services and later reclaim the amount with a receipt. It was noted that the present rules meant that any payment over £100 on the Council account required the presence of the Chair of this

Committee and the Clerk in order to do so which restricted matters further. It was also noted that the current wording did not prevent staff from paying in cash and claiming their money back.

Members **AGREED** that they would approve the inclusion of use of personal credit or debit cards.

Point 6.19 and 6.20 – members **AGREED** to increase the maximum amount that could be spent on the Council’s debit card on the authority of the Clerk along to £250.

Point 7.6 – members **AGREED** to include the section relating to the countersignature of the payroll paperwork.

Point 10.6 – Members **AGREED** to the inclusion of this item, provided the typo was corrected to read £1000.

Point 11.2 – Members **AGREED** to include “both members and senior staff”

Point 18.2 – this related to the suspension of Financial Regulations, which was a recommendation from One Voice Wales for inclusion.

Members queried if including this point would allow them to approve purchases in instances where it had only been possible to obtain 2 quotes, which the Clerk/RFO agreed to check. It was also noted that this item was included elsewhere under a different number and the recommendation was to move it to become 18.2.

Members **AGREED** to make the change.

Cllr Hugh Shepardson **PROPOSED**, seconded by Cllr Bob Walpole that the above recommended changes be forwarded to the Ordinary Meeting/Annual Meeting for approval. **RESOLVED**.

The Clerk/RFO reminded members that it was within the remit of the Chairs Committee to oversee this document, but that he saw no need to duplicate the work now it had been done by this Committee.

**ACTION: Deputy Town Clerk**

## **9. Update on Councillor training**

Members noted the document and thanked staff for preparing it. Members requested that the document reference the title or name of the staff member who delivered the Dementia Champion training.

Members noted that the document only covered the period from 2019 and felt that it would be best practice for it to cover the whole term of the Council, and for it to be maintained from the start of the next Council.

## **10. Any referred matters from other Committees**

None were raised.

## **11. Any other urgent matters at the discretion of the Chair**

The Chair returned to the matter of the urgent work for the projects group that had begun. He raised concern that the payment for the work had been authorised but that the loan had not yet been

received, which meant it would have to be drawn from reserves. By doing so there was a possibility that it would push the Council below their 3 month minimum level set in their policies.

The Clerk/RFO stated that they had had to dip into the reserves for other issues recently and that there was circa £18,000 headroom in the reserves. He stated that none of the bills so far paid would deplete that below the minimum level. If there was surplus from this years budget it would also top up the reserve amount.

Cllr David Owens **PROPOSED**, seconded by Cllr Peter Freeman that the Committee officially recognise the risk that the approved works could result in the Council Reserves dipping below their minimum level and that the Committee maintained its authority to alter the reserves level.

**RESOLVED.**

**ACTION: Clerk/RFO**

Members raised a concern that the Spring Newsletter being discussed at the next Regeneration and Community Engagement Committee meeting was going out in the name of the Council without all members having had sight of it. It was also queried if the document would or should contain any information or justification for the increase to the precept, or other matters beyond the scope of the Regeneration and Community Engagement Committee alone. Members recognised that the new Local Government Act coming into force next year would require the production of an annual report and they believed this newsletter could be seen as a forerunner for that.

Cllr Peter Freeman **PROPOSED**, seconded by Cllr Linda Edwards that the meeting should proceed in camera. **RESOLVED.**

3.50pm

*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.

**12. To confirm the minutes of the Finance, Governance and Personnel meetings held on Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> February 2021**

Cllr Linda Edwards **PROPOSED**, seconded by Cllr Bob Walpole that provided that the typo correction was made the minutes were an accurate record of the meeting. **RESOLVED.**

**13. Matters arising**

Members noted an update from the Clerk/RFO relating to the outstanding invoice.

**14. To consider schedule of accounts**

Members noted the greater detail included in relation to service bills.

**15. Consideration of outstanding invoices**

There were none.

**16. Update on staff training**

Members noted the document and thanked those who compiled it.

Member **AGREED** to the Clerk/RFO's request to attend the SLCC and OVW conference and recommended the Deputy Town Clerk also attend and approved the costs for both.

**Clerk/RFO**

**17. Update on staffing issues**

Members noted that staff appraisals would be conducted at the end of the month.

Meeting ended at 3.59pm