

(PUBLIC) Minutes of Pembrey and Burry Port Town Council

Finance Governance and Personnel Committee Meeting

Tuesday 9th February 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 (arr. 10.35), John Hedley Jones, Andrew Phillips, Hugh Shepardson, Bob Walpole

Officers: Huw Thomas (Clerk/RFO), Shân Loudon (Deputy Clerk), Ed Davies (Administrative Assistant – minute taker)

10.30am -11.40am

1. To receive apologies for absence

None 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 Tuesday 12th January 2021

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

4. To consider any matters arising from the minutes

Members discussed whether it would be worth reviewing the policy of distributing hard copies of the draft minutes in addition to the digital versions. It was noted that at present the policy was for all minutes for noting to be distributed via email whereas members of committees would receive hard copies as part of their document pack for the meeting in question. Some members stated their preference for reading their documentation on paper rather than screen.

Cllr Peter Freeman arrived at 10.35am.

The Clerk/RFO advised that stationery costs were currently over budget, however many felt that the exceptional circumstances of this year may be sufficient explanation.

Members enquired as to the analysis of the utility costs requested at the last meeting. The Clerk/RFO stated that his analysis showed that across all properties there was about £7,000 remaining in the budget for this year. The predicted spending suggested the total by the end of year would be about even. He added that doing the analysis showed that the electricity budget was slightly above expectations, while gas was below. Because of this a further analysis of usage across properties was being made.

In response to a query the Clerk/RFO confirmed that regarding the posting of the notice of co-option there had been no enquiries made as yet, but that the advice he had received indicated that the notice could be reposted periodically.

In response to a query on those members who were not at present regularly attending meetings, he stated that one Councillor was now attending code of conduct training while there had been no response from the other.

5. Consideration of budget monitoring report

Members noted the detailed figures they had received and requested the Clerk/RFO give them the exceptions at the high level only.

The Clerk/RFO then confirmed that the Facilities budget was at 79.8% which put it slightly over budget although some of that would be returned once the payment from the Section 106 fund for the works to Pembrey AFC pitch had been received.

In response to a query, he confirmed that there was 1 outstanding bill to be settled before he claimed the total amount before the end of March. He further added that he would speak to the representative from the club about seeking to access the full amount of the awarded grant so as to receive the full benefit.

ACTION: Clerk/RFO

The installation of scaffolding at Pembrey Memorial Hall was the large expense at that facility while the spending in some of the parks was covered by the Places for Nature grant, which had to be spent before the end of March.

The Finance, Governance and Personnel Committee budget stood at 79% which was caused mostly by the pre-payment of insurance at the start of the year. It was expected to end the year about level. The Clerk/RFO reminded members that employee costs were slightly higher than budgeted for as the structure they had was different to the one expected when setting the budget. He also added that the lack of expenditure on election costs had provided them with some headroom.

The Regeneration and Community Engagement budget stood at 61.5%. He stated it was unlikely to outstrip its revised budget for this year. He highlighted that the income had been produced by the Christmas lunches which was being gathered in the Community Events fund while the Meals on Wheels programme income was being gathered in the Community Resilience Fund. The other income was from the Christmas Hampers for which the Council had received some donations and a grant to assist with the costs.

In terms of expenses for the Committee, the Community events expenses had been incurred by the creation of the sleigh which it had not been possible to use and some was what the Council had spent on Meals on Wheels, Food Forward and the Christmas Hampers.

Members requested that the Clerk/RFO provide them with a report or a means of showing which expenditure had been covered by grants.

ACTION: Clerk/RFO

Members discussed what options were available to a community forum if it wished to set up a project which necessitated the accrual and spending of funds. The Clerk/RFO stated that his

preference would be for an account to be set up in the name of the forum rather than to use the Town Council's account. If it was the decision of the Council to do otherwise he would want approval to be given by this Committee and the Town Council.

In closing on his report, the Clerk/RFO confirmed for members that the overall position for the Council was at 71% of its budget which was slightly underbudget. However, he reminded members that in previous years there was a tendency for costs to be accrued in March and his prediction was for the budget to end up quite flat.

6. Update on asset transfers.

Although not an asset transfer, the Clerk/RFO informed members that a list of missing documentation relating to the sale of Copperworks had been requested and staff had supplied it to the solicitor who would be reviewing the paperwork and proceeding with the sale.

He stated that the other asset transfers were progressing slowly as they were not a high priority at the moment. He would maintain pressure to get closure on the transfers in due course. In response to a query he stated he did not anticipate any costs to the Council at this point.

Regarding the transfer of land associated with Pembrey School, he confirmed that he had given the officer from the County Council the contact details of the Town Council's solicitor to make progress.

7. Update on working arrangements.

The Clerk/RFO stated that he wished it to be noted that to ensure they Council was doing all that it could for its staff, they had arranged for one member of staff to move into a side room office at Burry Port Memorial Hall temporarily to reduce the numbers of people who were in the offices and buildings at a time. He also highlighted that the hiring of additional vans to enable staff to travel and undertake their work safely had been undertaken.

8. Any referred matters from other Committees.

Nothing had been referred.

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

The Clerk/RFO stated that the Public Works Loan would be applied for at the end of this month to ensure it was taken up at the start of the next financial year. He added that the business plan was proceeding well.

Members discussed recent news relating to a viral video from a parish council meeting in England. It was noted that in relation to Standing Orders, there was a similar clause which allowed for any two members to call for an extraordinary meeting when in disagreement with the Chair. This was within section 18 of the Council's Standing Orders. Members also noted that should a situation arise where that clause needed enacting, there would likely already be a dispute between members which would only be exaggerated by the possible interpretations of the Standing Orders.

The Clerk/RFO confirmed that the Council's Standing Orders were based on those produced by NALC. He added that he and the Deputy Town Clerk had already been reviewing the Standing Orders in preparation for the Annual Meeting in May and would include section 18 in that review. Members welcomed the news.

Cllr Linda Edwards **PROPOSED**, seconded by Cllr John Hedley Jones that the meeting should proceed 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.

10. To confirm the minutes of the Finance, Governance and Personnel meetings held on Tuesday 12th January 2021.

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

11. Matters arising.

Members discussed an update on outstanding invoices.

Cllr David Owens **PROPOSED**, seconded by Cllr Andrew Phillips for the Clerk to proceed in line with Council policy. **RESOLVED**.

ACTION: Clerk/RFO

12. To consider schedule of accounts

Members noted the schedule as presented.

13. Consideration of outstanding invoices

There were none.

14. Consideration of appraisal documentation (*previously approved by FPG May 2018*).

Cllr John Hedley Jones **PROPOSED**, seconded by Cllr Bob Walpole that the appraisal documentation be accepted and used for staff appraisals. **RESOLVED**.

ACTION: Clerk/RFO

15. Update on staffing issues.

Members noted the information supplied by the Clerk/RFO.

Meeting ended 11.40am.