

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

**Finance Governance and Personnel Committee Special Meeting**

**Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> October 2021**

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

**Present:** Cllrs Linda Edwards, Peter Freeman (arr. 2.10pm), John Hedley Jones, Michael Theodoulou and Bob Walpole.

**Apologies:** Cllr Hugh Shepardson.

**Absent:** Cllrs Robert John and Andrew Phillips.

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

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

2pm – 3.15pm

**1. To receive apologies for absence.**

Apologies had been received from Cllr Hugh Shepardson.

Cllr Linda Edwards informed members she would have to leave the meeting before 3pm.

**2. To appoint a Vice Chair.**

Cllr Michael Theodoulou **PROPOSED**, seconded by Cllr John Hedley Jones that Cllr Bob Walpole be nominated for the role of Vice Chair. **RESOLVED.**

**3. To receive members' declarations of interest.**

None were made.

**4. Consideration of the Finance, Governance and Personnel Committees contribution to the Council strategy.**

Members discussed matters surrounding the strategy for the three elements of this Committee's delegated responsibilities indicated by its title.

Finance

Members were asked to discuss what framework to set around this topic. It was recognised that while different Committees had delegated responsibility for their own budgets, this Committee should have an input in what approaches the Council takes regarding its precept setting strategy and its aims for income such as the fees and charges for the use of facilities or the cemetery. This strategy would have to incorporate the outside pressures and influences affecting the Council such as expectations from Welsh Government and the community with regards providing services or support, or the impact new housing stock will have on the precept. The strategy should also be built

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around the existing policies the Council had, such as the Reserves Policy and the Financial Regulations.

It was recognised that precept increases of a certain amount should be accompanied by public consultation to ensure there was approval, and it was discussed whether this should form a definite part of the strategy.

**Cllr Peter Freeman arrived 2.10pm**

Members discussed some of the options surrounding the precept setting strategy and the implications of each. It was noted that even if an agreed strategy for the precept was finalised before the end of the year, it would be too late to incorporate the budget setting for 2022/23 as a part of it.

Members discussed the strategy surrounding fees & charges. They noted that the Facilities & Assets Committee had delegated responsibility for this area, but that their priority had been to avoid increasing if possible so as to keep prices low. Meanwhile the Regeneration & Community Engagement Committee which had delegated responsibility over grants was able to award funding to groups to assist with the fees and charges incurred by hall hire, including those set by the Council. Members discussed how these would be affected with a more clearly defined policy, and what impact that may have. In particular whether setting a policy to be more commercially competitive so as to provide better services was a suitable framework.

Regarding other income it was noted that historically, some Councillors had urged caution regarding grant application in the belief that it would stretch the limited staffing resource. However it was felt that this position would have to change so the Council could maximise this income stream so that it was able to deliver the services expected of it.

*Personnel*

Members discussed the impact the revised training policy would have on staff and councillors, and whether the programme should be tailored to meet the identified aims of Committees. Members recognised that they would need to focus on two other areas also in relation to staff, namely reward and wellbeing. It was noted that practices in many organisations had changed significantly over recent years and that the Council needed to measure itself against modern employment practices. This would necessitate a review of the current pay systems and ways of rewarding achievement. Members noted that the Council had lessons to learn from past experiences that would impact the strategy in this area also.

Members considered whether or not a percentage of income should be set aside for training.

**Cllr Linda Edwards left the meeting 2.43pm. Cllr Bob Walpole chaired the remainder of the meeting in his capacity as Committee Vice Chair.**

Members discussed the need to address the work culture at the Council including various ways a change in that could be achieved. As part of that, members recognised that this would be supported by ensuring Councillors received training as necessary, with a strong emphasis on the needs of incoming Councillors following the election. Members recognise the long term challenges faced in maintaining a strong personnel strategy when the councillors changed at least every 5 years with a necessary buy-in for all newly elected members into the existing system.

*Governance*

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Members noted that the above discussion impacted on governance as an identified means of achieving culture change was through strong leadership. It was noted that Pembrey and Burry Port Town Council was the only larger town council which did not have an executive board or a council leader.

Members discussed the expectations that incoming Councillors sometimes had in terms of operation and highlighted that many expected to encounter adversarial politics, something which this Council had not found beneficial in this term. It was noted that any strategy which aimed to create an executive function would need to address inclusivity and perhaps meritocracy to ensure there was no return to adversarial politics.

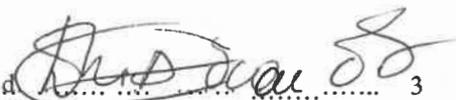
Members could not come to a clear consensus on how best to set up that framework and **AGREED** to refer to the Strategy Committee for further discussion.

**ACTION: Deputy Town Clerk.**

Members believed it would be necessary to set out a clear strategy relating to delegation to staff to prevent Councillors from interfering in the delivery of work through micro-management. It was noted that the present Committee structure had delegated a lot of authority away from the Full Town Council to its Committees and sub-Committees, but that this should be assessed as it was resulting in staff having to spend a significant amount of time reporting and attending meetings instead of delivering on the decisions of the Council. It was noted that they might need an impact assessment to make an informed decision.

Meeting ended 3.15 pm

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