

**Pembrey and Burry Port Town Council**

**Ordinary Meeting**

**Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> February 2019**

**Present: Councillor Robert John (Mayor)**

**Councillors Richard Adler, Mrs Linda Edwards, Mrs Amanda Fox, Peter Freeman, John James, Stephen James, Mrs Shirley Matthews, Mrs Lisa Mitchell, Mrs Karen Francis-Morris, David Owens, Hugh Shepardson, Michael Theodoulou, Mrs Moira Thomas and Bob Walpole.**

**In attendance: Shan Loudon (Temporary Assistant Town Clerk)**

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

**(Memorial Hall 7.00pm – 8.30pm)**

**144. Opening Prayer**

A prayer was read by the Rev. Nicholas Jones.

**145. To receive apologies for absence**

Apologies had been received from Cllrs Mrs Pam Every, John Hedley Jones and Mrs Mary Wenman. The RFO and TSO had also given their apologies.

**146. To receive members' declarations of interest in respect of the business to be transacted**

Cllr Richard Adler declared an interest in agenda Item 151 as he was the owner of a company that hired facilities from the Town Council.

Cllr Hugh Shepardson declared an interest in agenda item 156 as he lived in a neighbouring property to planning application S/38385.

Cllr John James declared an interest in agenda item 156 as he was a member of Carmarthenshire County Council's Planning Committee.

**147. To consider Police Business if any**

Apologies had been received from Sergeant Craig Williams and the report previously circulated.

**148. To confirm the minutes of the meetings held on Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> January 2019**

Cllr Stephen James **PROPOSED** that the minutes were an accurate record of the meeting, seconded by Cllr Michael Theodoulou.

Members voted to confirm the minutes with 14 voting in favour, 0 against and with 0 abstention. The minutes were therefore **APPROVED** as an accurate representation of the meeting.

**Action: Admin Assist**

**149. To receive a verbal update from the Chairs Committee**

Members were informed that there had only been one official Chairs meeting on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> February in conjunction with the Finance, Governance and Personnel Committee and that the details of the meeting would be discussed in camera at the end of the meeting.

**150. To consider the budget monitoring report**

Members were informed that no report had been prepared as the RFO had been instructed to focus on completing the Annual Return, until that had been completed there was no further report to give.

**151. To ratify 2019/20 fees and charges as recommended by Facilities and Assets Committee**

Members were informed that the recommendation of the Facilities and Assets Committee was for a 3% increase to the fees and charges to keep in line with a cost of living increase.

There followed a discussion of the need to impose an increase with some members expressing concern at the impact the increase would have on local groups and organisations who hired Council facilities as well as the public.

**Cllr Mrs Lisa Mitchell arrived and joined the meeting 7.10pm**

The discussion continued with members hearing that the Facilities and Assets Committee had discussed some of the issues around the increase and had noted that in conjunction with the change in rules regarding the use of the Local Donations Grant or Community Grant for allowing it to be used to pay for rent to the Town Council, the negative impact could be limited. It was confirmed that any applications would be assessed on a case by case basis

A wider discussion of the pressures that were forcing an increase to the Council's precept including the necessity to meet legal obligations through increased staffing requirements.

Cllr Stephen James **PROPOSED** that the 3% increase recommended by the Facilities and Assets Committee be accepted, seconded by Cllr Michael Theodoulou.

There was a brief discussion about how the figure of 3% had been reached with alternative figures suggested. Members noted however that they would first have to decide on the proposal and if it failed continue the discussion on alternatives.

A recorded vote was requested with the results as follows:

In favour: Cllrs Stephen James, Michael Theodoulou, David Owens, Peter Freeman, Hugh Shepardson and Robert John.

Against: Cllrs Mrs Linda Edwards, Mrs Amanda Fox, John James, Bob Walpole, Mrs Karen Francis-Morris and Mrs Moira Thomas.

Abstentions: Cllrs Mrs Lisa Mitchell, Richard Adler, Mrs Shirley Matthews.

With the vote tied the Mayor gave his casting vote in favour of the proposal and it was therefore **RESOLVED** for the increase to be accepted.

**Action: Temp Assist Town Clerk**

**152. To consider the report prepared by Cllr Michael Theodoulou on the One Voice Wales presentation from the Auditor General for Wales**

Members heard the report which highlighted that there had been an increase in the number of Town and Community Councils which had not submitted their Annual Returns on time, with 17 still outstanding. This was a significant concern of the Auditor General when the Town and Community Councils were seeing an increase to their responsibilities. Members were reminded that Pembrey and Burry Port Town Council was one of those to be late in its submission and that it had been named along with the others in the official report. Members noted that there had been extenuating circumstances of which they were already aware, but that this did not excuse the lateness of submission in the eyes of the Auditor General. Because of this the RFO had been instructed to solely focus on the submission of the return.

Members heard how the Council may be made subject of a report in the public interest if the Auditor General deemed it necessary, but it would be notified if that were to happen. The officer who would be responsible for conducting that report had stated that the aforementioned extenuating circumstances would be considered as part of the decision of whether or not to conduct the investigation.

Members were asked to note that the advice on the amount Council's should hold in reserves had been changed from 3-9 months of its precept, with the size of the Council precept being the key factor for Council's to judge themselves as to how much to retain. It was also noted that the Finance, Governance and Personnel Committee had been asked to review the situation and make a recommendation to the Town Council in due course.

It was queried as to why this had been raised as a separate agenda item to agenda item 159, and it had been felt significant enough to warrant inclusion as a separate item.

In response to the concerns raised at the serious issues highlighted in the report and the oversight of the Finance, Governance and Personnel Committee of the situation, the Chair of that Committee responded that it had provided what support it could for the RFO to do the work that had been asked of him but that the increased workload placed on him in the absence of the Clerk had proven too much to allow him to complete his regular duties and that he felt there had been few alternatives available in the situation.

In relation to the levels of the reserves, some members urged caution and not to look at using them for revenue.

**153. Approval of the appointment of Charles and Co as the Town Council's internal auditor**

Members heard how this firm had been used to conduct the Council's internal audits for several years, and that they had done good work.

Cllr Bob Walpole **PROPOSED** that Charles and Co be appointed as the Town Council's internal Auditor, seconded by Cllr Stephen James.

In the ensuing vote 14 members voted in favour of the proposal with 1 abstention and 0 against. It was therefore **RESOLVED** that they be appointed.

**Action: Temp Assist Town Clerk**

**154. Approval of the addition of Cllr Bob Walpole, Vice Chair Finance, Governance and Personnel Committee, as a cheque signatory**

Cllr Stephen James **PROPOSED** that Cllr Bob Walpole be approved as a cheque signatory on the Councils accounts, seconded by Cllr Michael Theodoulou.

In the ensuing vote 15 members voted in favour with 0 abstentions and 0 against. It was therefore **APPROVED** that Cllr Bob Walpole be made a cheque signatory on the Councils accounts.

**Action: Temp Assist Town Clerk/RFO**

**155. Approval of the proposal that the three Chairs of Finance, Governance and Personnel, Facilities and Assets and Regeneration and Wellbeing committees be members of the aforementioned committees**

There was some confusion over the need for this proposal with some members querying why, if all members were free to attend all meetings why the Chairs should be made voting members of each committee. There was some concern that this may unbalance the Committees politically.

It was clarified to members that the proposal had been brought forward in recognition of the increasing work in the near future that would require cross committee working and that the potential for unbalancing of the Committees had not been thought of. It was suggested that in remedy the number of Labour members on each Committee could be increased also, but some members felt that with the increase in Sub-Committee and Committee meetings this would result in more work.

There followed a discussion of process with members agreeing that they would first vote on the agenda proposal and if it failed to find an alternative.

In the ensuing vote 5 members voted in favour, with 7 against and 3 abstentions. The proposal therefore **FAILED**.

Cllr Peter Freeman **PROPOSED** that the Chairs be provided with an agenda for all Committee meetings so that they could attend in their capacity as members, seconded by Cllr Stephen James.

In the ensuing vote 14 members voted in favour with 1 abstention and 0 against. It was therefore **AGREED** that all Chairs would receive agendas for each main Committee meeting.

**Action: Temp Assist Town Clerk**

**156. To consider the following planning applications**

<b><u>Application No.</u></b>	<b><u>Name and Address of Applicant</u></b>	<b><u>Description of Application</u></b>
S/38313	NBA Development Ltd. C/O Agent (Asbri Planning Ltd.)	Construction of a caretaker's store, Sandhurst, The Harbour, Burry Port.
S/38373	Pobl Group, 7-13 The Kingsway, Swansea, SA1 5JN	Construction of two additional dwelling houses (as plots 104 & 105) at land part of former Goodig Hotel, Pwll Road, Burry Port. SA16 0TA
S/38385	Baxter, 43 Elkington Road, Burry Port, SA16 0AA	Proposed semi-detached disabled annex to allow for independent living for occupant

Cllr Hugh Shepardson restated his declaration of interest as previously, for clarity.

Members heard how the Planning Sub-Committee had failed to meet on the 19<sup>th</sup> February with members reminded that if they were not able to attend they should contact the office in advance of the meeting.

Members expressed that as they were unaware of the details of the above planning applications that it would be prudent for an urgent meeting of the Planning Sub-Committee to discuss them instead of the Council making a decision at this meeting. Members **AGREED** that the Sub-Committee should look to arrange a meeting as soon as possible.

**ACTION: TSO and Chair of Planning Sub-Committee**

There followed a discussion about what the Council's rules were in relation to providing substitutes at Sub-Committee meetings. It was also discussed whether or not low attendance was a recurring problem, and whether or not the Chairs Committee should be asked to review the Sub-Committees activity and look to merge its work with that of another. However, attendance had been sufficient for this not to be an issue.

#### **157. To receive any County Councillors' reports**

Cllr Hugh Shepardson gave a report on behalf of himself and Mrs Shirley Matthews as follows:

- Planning permission for the new Pembrey School was granted earlier in the day
- Investment of £4.5m from the Capital Grant fund was secured for the new school
- Investment of £500,000 had also been secured for Pembrey Country Park which would facilitate the installation of the vehicle recognition system, expected within 6 weeks and the refurbishment of the café with expected completion within 6 months.
- Pembrey Country Park had also secured funding for replacement and updated signage and new toilet facilities near to the play area.

The news was greeted enthusiastically by all members.

Cllr Mrs Amanda Fox gave a report on behalf of herself and John James as follows:

- The affordable housing development proposal at Glanmor Terrace was granted planning permission earlier in the day. It would provide 32 affordable residential properties. After consultation with Bacce residents the development would include a community Boules court and off-road parking provision for all residents of Glanmor Terrace.
- The harbourside super park was also well under construction with reports that it should be ready within a few weeks.

In response to a query it was confirmed that the housing would be rental and none will be for sale and more details of the eco-style was given including the kit-build design and reduced running costs, with residents of similar properties elsewhere reporting household bills being a little as £1 a day.

Cllr John James added to the report the following:

- That the County Council had agreed to invest £1.3m in Burry Port Harbour and to partner with the Marine Group in the purchase of a new dredger for clearing the harbour.
- That a simplification to the process of applying for social housing was being made reducing 4 bands down to 2.
- The official opening of Ysgol Parc y Tywyn had taken place.

Members queried the purchase of the dredger with some recalling that the initial conversations with the Marine Group had stated they would be funding the dredging. In response it was clarified that the stated investment was money that had previously been committed.

Concerns regarding Carmarthenshire County Council funding the dredging were expressed that the ratepayers were having to foot the bill when they had been told they would not, and at how the Council was conducting its business. Members were advised to raise their concerns at the next arranged meeting with the responsible County Council Officers and the Marine Group.

Cllr John James stated that if members had concerns they should raise them when we meet with the Marine Group.

It was clarified for members that the Glanmor Terrace development generated further community gain through the provision of hanging baskets, traffic improvements through the provision of parking facilities and the Boules Court.

There were calls for recognition for the work of former Councillor Mrs Pat Jones who had argued strongly for the provision of new affordable homes on the site of the Glanmor Terrace development previously. It was noted that Pat Jones and her family had been contacted already and that she had been invited to attend a photo opportunity.

#### **158. To consider the Mayor's report**

The Mayor reported the following:

- Attended the official opening of Ysgol Parc y Tywyn, which he believed was a credit to the designers, construction firm and reflected well the enthusiasm of the staff and pupils for the school. It would bring tremendous value for the community.

Members discussed briefly that the construction firm had donated £500 for the beautification of the roundabout near the school and all members congratulated with enthusiasm the success of the County Council in its delivery of the new school. Members felt that once all 3 primary schools were in their new homes the future would be very bright for Pembrey and Burry Port. There were calls for the recognition of the voices in the community that had called for the development of the new school also.

Members heard how Mark James, Chief Executive of Carmarthenshire County Council would soon be leaving his post and how in the past he had been a good friend of the community of Pembrey and Burry Port. Some present felt that there should be official recognition for his service and friendship over the years from the Town Council.

Cllr Stephen James **PROPOSED** that Mark James be sent a letter of thanks from the Council, seconded by John James.

In the ensuing vote 11 voted in favour, with 0 against and 4 abstentions. It was therefore **RESOLVED** that the Town Council would send a letter of thanks to Mark James.

**Action: Temp Assist Town Clerk**

The Mayor continued:

- Reported to the meeting of the sad news that Mr Harold Williams, who he had visited in an official capacity in advance of Remembrance Day had passed away in a fire in his house last week. He informed the meeting that he had received a letter

of thanks from him following the visit and given the news, stated he would send a letter of condolence to the family.

**Action: Cllr Robert John**

**159. To receive reports by elected members as Council Representatives on outside bodies**

Cllr Michael Theodoulou reported that he had attended the Hywel Dda NHS Health Board stakeholder meeting which had highlighted the following issues:

- The West Wales Care Partnership had submitted a huge bid of £18.2m to make improvements to reduce the cost of care in the area through preventative investments. It was confirmed that this was additional funding rather than redirection of funds, so there would be no negative impact to service delivery. £12m had already been drawn down to the scheme and this news was warmly welcomed.
- Continuous communications with the community was resulting in “engagement tiredness” and so they were looking at ways to reduce duplication of questioning and streamlining the process.
- The stakeholders had questioned a report that the recent patient survey data through the new customer/user feedback from April 2018 until the present showed an 87% approval rating from the 18,000 surveyed; and were asking for more detailed reporting as the figures seemed too good to be true.
- The health board were looking at integrating community resources through many means including site rationalisation.
- A 3 year strategy on mental health services was being set.
- That the reports would be available for all members from the office.

Members raised concerns at the lack of mental health services for younger people and asked if it had been discussed. It was clarified that it had been raised and the intention was for that to be addressed as part of the 3-year strategy document. It was also noted that the Welsh Government was implementing a strategy via schools but that it was a long term process.

In response to a query it was clarified that the 7 main areas to benefit from the West Wales Care Partnership money had not yet been named, and that many factors would contribute to their location.

**160. To note the following minutes for information:**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Meeting</b>
Wednesday 9 <sup>th</sup> January 2019	Regeneration and Wellbeing Committee
Monday 14 <sup>th</sup> January 2019	Finance, Governance and Personnel Committee
Friday 18 <sup>th</sup> January 2019	Events Sub Committee
Thursday 24 <sup>th</sup> January 2018	Public Engagement and Communication Sub Committee
Friday 1 <sup>st</sup> February 2019	Events Sub Committee

All of the minutes were noted.

Some members raised a concern that there would be a duplication of efforts if the public meeting about the Garreglwyd development mentioned in the Regeneration and Wellbeing Committee minutes was undertaken, as the community had already organised themselves and held a number of meetings on the issue, and that the views of the Town Council had

been heard at those meetings too. In response it was stated that the discussion recorded in the minutes had taken place prior to those meetings being arranged and that no attempt would be made to duplicate or supplant the community's work on the matter.

Members indicated their support for the work of the Pembrey Village Action Group and offered its encouragement.

**161. To consider communications received**

All communications were noted.

**162. In camera discussions**

Cllr Stephen James **PROPOSED** that the meeting move being in camera, seconded by Cllr David Owens.

The Council indicated unanimously in favour of the proposal and it was therefore **AGREED** to proceed 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 the 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:

- a) To confirm the confidential minutes of the Town Council meeting held on Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> January 2019 (**copy enclosed**).
- b) Update on staffing issues.

Ed Davies left the meeting at 8.30pm.