

Pembrey and Burry Port Town Council

Ordinary Meeting

Wednesday 18th December 2019

**Present: Councillor Peter Freeman (Mayor)
Councillors Richard Adler, Linda Edwards, Robert John, John Hedley Jones, Lisa Mitchell, Hugh Shepardson, Michael Theodoulou, Moira Thomas (arr. 7.05pm), Bob Walpole and Mary Wenman (arr. 7.05pm).**

In attendance: Huw Thomas (Acting Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer), Shân Loudon (Temporary Assistant Town Clerk) Kevin Williams (Projects Manger), Louise Robinson (Community Development Officer) and Paul Mann (Cemetery and Facilities Superintendent)

Minute taker: Ed Davies (Administrative Assistant)

(Memorial Hall 7.00pm – 9.15pm)

103. Opening prayer

A prayer was read out by the Rev. Nicholas Jones.

104. To receive apologies for absence

Apologies had been received from Cllrs Pam Every, Karen Morris and David Owens.

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

None were made.

106. To consider Police Business if any

No report had been received.


107. To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 20th November 2019

Cllrs Peter Freeman and Michael Theodoulou intended to abstain due to not being present for the whole meeting.

Cllr Hugh Shepardson **PROPOSED** that the Council accept the distributed minutes were an accurate record of the meeting, seconded by Cllr Robert John.

In the ensuing vote 9 members voted in favour of the proposal with 2 abstention and **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes.

ACTION: Admin Assist

Mayor/Maer 
15/01/2020

108. To receive a verbal update from the Chairs Committee

Members heard that the scheduled meeting had been cancelled but that the Chairs had met with the Clerk to set the agenda for the Ordinary Meeting. There had also been a special meeting to discuss matters, which members would be updated on in camera.

109. To consider the budget monitoring report

The Acting Clerk and RFO had highlighted for members some of the key figures in the report. He reminded those present that each Committee had seen copies of their respective budget reports as well as receiving his run through of key items and given their approval. He reminded members that the expected percentage target for the budget at this time of year should be 58.33%

Facilities

The RFO stated that if the S106 funding were taken out of consideration, the overall income would be at 81% of its target.

In response to a query the Projects Manager confirmed that the additional spending under the General Maintenance heading was due to the installation of the two new container storage facilities.

Members were asked to raise their concerns in relation to spending at the Committee meeting but were reminded that the CFS had undertaken the urgent work in relation to the play areas as instructed by the Committee.

The RFO also commented that without the additional S106 spending the expenditure total would be at 52%

Members noted the highlighted items from the other Committee budgets without comment. A discussion was had in relation to underspend, and members heard that the advice of the Finance, Governance and Personnel Committee was being referred back to each Committee for their next meetings. Members also discussed that there were a number of underspent headings which could perhaps be used to offset some expected expenditure in the next financial year.

The RFO reported that on investigation, that it was the Schedule of Accounts that had been included in the minutes rather than the budget monitoring report and that this information was now dealt with in-camera due to containing commercially sensitive information.

Cllr Moira Thomas **PROPOSED** that a copy of the Budget Monitoring Report, which did not include commercially sensitive information be made available on the website, seconded by Cllr Mary Wenman.

In the ensuing vote 11 members voted in favour of the proposal, with 0 against and 0 abstentions, it was therefore **RESOLVED** to accept the proposal.

Cllr Linda Edwards **PROPOSED** that the report be accepted seconded by Cllr Richard Adler. The Council voted unanimously in favour of the proposal and **RESOLVED** to accept it.

110. To consider the following planning applications

Members were informed that the sub-committee had not been quorate at its last meeting and so had not discussed the received applications. The Council then looked at each application in turn and took a decision as follows

<u>Application No.</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Name and Address of Applicant</u>	<u>Description of Application</u>
S/39813	19.11.2019	Mr Andrew Williams, 60 Ardwyn, Burry Port, SA16 0SL	Addition of outbuilding in back garden, to be used as a garden shed and sitting area with roof coverage at 60 Ardwyn, Burry Port, SA16 0SL
This application had been previously agreed to by the Council.			
S/39832	22.11.2019	Mr Rhys Roberts, Penllwyn Isaf Farm, Mountain Road, Pembrey, Burry Port, SA16 0BQ	Proposed new agricultural building to be constructed over an already existing concrete yard at Penllwyn Isaf Farm, Mountain Road, Pembrey, Burry Port, SA16 0BQ
Members had no objections and recommended the application be APPROVED , with 11 in favour, 0 against, and 0 abstentions.			
S/39857	26.11.2019	Miss Jayne Butler, 9a Dolau Fan Road, Burry Port, SA16 0RD	Proposed garage and storage to front of property with a proposed raised patio/balcony above at 9a Dolau Fan Road, Burry Port, SA16 0RD
Members had no objections and recommended the application be APPROVED , with 11 in favour, 0 against, and 0 abstentions.			
S/39883	29.11.2019	Jehu Group, Number One, Waterton Park, Bridgend, CF31 3PH	Discharge of Condition no. 3 (submission of details of specification and schedule of external finishes) of S/36993 at land part of former Goodig Hotel, Pwll Road, Burry Port, Carmarthenshire
Members noted the advice of the Projects Manager, who stated that the discharge of condition request was due to having met the requirements of the planning approval condition. Members recommended the application be APPROVED with 9 voting in favour, 0 against and 2 abstentions. Cllr Robert John abstained due to living opposite the development and Cllr Lisa Mitchell abstained as a close relative was employed as a contractor on the development.			
S/39884	29.11.2019	Jehu Group, Number One, Waterton Park, Bridgend, CF31 3PH	Discharge of Condition no. 23 (submission of landscape management and maintenance plan details) of S/36993) of S/36993 at land part of former Goodig Hotel, Pwll Road, Burry Port, Carmarthenshire
Members noted the advice of the Projects Manager, who stated that the discharge of condition request was due to having met the requirements of the planning approval condition. Members recommended the application be APPROVED with 9 voting in favour, 0 against and 2 abstentions. Cllr Robert John abstained due to living opposite the development and Cllr Lisa Mitchell abstained as a close relative was employed as a contractor on the development.			

ACTION: Projects Manager

111. To receive any County Councillors' reports

Cllr Hugh Shepardson reported that the County Council had set a provisional budget settlement at a 4.58% increase, but that it may reduce slightly prior to the final announcement in early 2020. He added that although the schools in the area were doing well, 61% of Carmarthenshire's schools were in deficit.

112. To receive the Mayor's report.

The Mayor provided a detailed list of the events he had attended as follows:

- 28th November – Cydweli Christmas lights switch on
- 29th November – Burry Port Christmas lights switch on
- 5th December – Pembrey Christmas lights switch on
- 6th December – Rotary Club Christmas Dinner in the Ashburnham Hotel
- 8th December – a Christmas Concert in St Peter's Church, Caerfyrddin
- 11th December – Probus Christmas Lunch in the Ashburnham Hotel
- 15th December – Christmas Tree Festival opening in St Illtyd's Church, Penbre
- 17th December – Town Council's OAP Christmas Lunch in Neuadd Goffa Porth Tywyn

He had also been attended the Christmas Fair in the Shoreline Caravan park where he had been asked to play the role of Santa Claus. He singled out a meeting with 5 young environment champions during the Burry Port Lights Switch on night and a reading he had made in St Illtyd's Church.

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

Cllr Michael Theodoulou reported on a recent meeting of the National Executive of One Voice Wales, where he had met with a Welsh Government Minister. The meeting had been in relation to the forthcoming Local Government (Elections) Bill, for which a consultation would be starting in January. As there was a large amount of relevant information his notes would be kept in the office and shared with members in due course. The key points he wished to highlight were as follows:

- Repeal of a limitation on allowing Town and Community Council to fund work on church buildings was discussed but dismissed.
- Discussion of the recent decision to extend the vote to 16 and 17 year olds suggests strongly that they will be enfranchised and can take part in elections by the next scheduled Town Council elections.
- Discussion relating to the proposal to allow the unitary authority to choose its voting method took place, with regards to whether or not this applied to Town and Community Councils, although no confirmation was reached. It was clarified that it could be a first-past-the-post system of a single-transferable-vote system.
- The merging of County Councils was still being encouraged but were not compulsory.
- Town and Community Council's would retain a 5 year fixed term of office.
- Council staff are able to stand for election as councillors, and only have to resign in the event they are elected.
- Additional restrictions to disqualify some from serving as Town Councillors, mostly under the terms of the Sexual Offences Act.

- Discussion of the proposal to remove the Returning Officers additional fee to reduce election costs as part of OVW push to reduce election costs to the ratepayer.
- Discussion of proposals to increase public participation in local democracy at Council meetings.
- Discussion and acknowledgment of the fact that annual reports are compulsory and need publishing after the financial year has ended.
- Training for Councillors and staff in relation to conduct, following pressure from the ombudsman due to frivolous complaints.
- Discussion of how elections take place and the number of returned councillors in situations where Town and Community Councils merge.
- An increase in the freedom to act by the Boundary Commission is expected. Presently they can only act when directed to by a minister, and so may have been politically motivated.
- Community polls during public meetings will no longer be allowable and are to be replaced by a system of petitions.
- Powers of Competence are to be changed to from 3 to 2 years in relation to “no qualified accounts”.
- The removal of prohibition of council meetings taking place in licenced premises.
- A consultation is to take place on preventing Town Councillors and County Councillors from serving in a dual capacity at 2 levels of local Government and from serving in 2 wards.
- The ombudsman is also encouraging Town Councils to create posts or roles along the lines of “leaders of political groups” and “leaders of Town Council”, with aim of creating a more controlled and disciplined environment. Some concern was raised as to what position this leaves independent Councillors, who were by definition not part of a group or party.
- To allow regulatory bodies to share information to allow more accurate cross-regulatory work.

Other issues beyond the above bill were also discussed, including:

- Annual financial reporting timetable for Clerks.
- Section 6 of the Environmental Impact report. It was confirmed that the Town Council has to formally approve the report and to publish it at least on its website. All members who were contributing were reminded to finish their report in time for the Town Council meeting in January.
- The issues concerning tax owed on councillor allowances was raised and passed to the minister.
- Seeking a change so that Town and Community Council precepts should be paid to them in one payment up front, as opposed to the current system, where 3 payments are made throughout the year.

114. Consideration of adoption of the Toilet Strategy report.

This item was discussed in camera due to the need to discuss commercially sensitive information.

115. Update on the 2020/21 budget status

Members were informed that an urgent meeting of the Finance, Governance and Personnel Committee had taken place earlier in the day where the proposed budget was discussed. During

the discussion it was felt that the proposed increases were too high. A decision had been taken to refer the budget of each Committee back with the advice to seek to reduce their budgets so that the overall precept increase would be around 10%. This was based on the significant increase that had been agreed in the previous precept and concerns on expected increases to the County level precept also.

Members were reminded that this was a decision for the Town Council alone, and that the Finance, Governance and Personnel Committee could only suggest rather than instruct. It was also noted that each Committee would need to discuss and approve their budgetary changes prior to the Ordinary Meeting in January, and so it was **AGREED** unanimously for the Acting Clerk and RFO to coordinate the meeting of each Committee to get an agreed budget in place by the January meeting of the Council.

ACTION: Acting Clerk and RFO

116. To consider a resignation letter received from a Councillor

Members heard that a letter of resignation had been received by the Acting Clerk from Cllr John James, which needed formal acceptance by the Council.

Members requested the letter be read out to understand the reasons for his resignation, which was done by the Acting Clerk.

Cllr Michael Theodoulou **PROPOSED** that the resignation be accepted, seconded by Cllr Robert John.

In the ensuing vote 11 members voted in favour with 0 against and 0 abstentions.

117. Consideration of a community hub

Members were informed of a proposal that had been discussed by the Regeneration and Wellbeing Committee and subsequently the Finance, Governance and Personnel Committee. The proposal concerned the demand for a community hub, that had been raised via the community forums and from Councillors interactions with the public. The CDO had identified a number of Council priorities that could be targeted using a hub, such as providing a safe space for young people on an evening, provide advice and access to web services for elderly residents and be a pick up point for recycling bags. The CDO had also identified potential funding but had advised it could take between 3-6 months for the application process to conclude. A potential building to act as the venue had been identified too.

The Regeneration and Wellbeing Committee had discussed the matter and concluded such a facility in the community would be beneficial and had agreed that the venue was suitable. They had noted that the owner was supportive of the idea and had agreed to initial terms that were favourable to the Council, however had stipulated that the rental agreement be taken up from early February. The Committee had felt the likelihood of securing the necessary funding was high but recognised that they had no budget or authority to tie the Council to a tenancy agreement. Firstly, they asked the Finance, Governance and Personnel Committee to approve to underwrite the rental costs from the General reserves for a time period to secure the building while working on the funding applications to establish a Community Hub in due course. Secondly, provided the Finance, Governance and Personnel Committee approved to underwrite the rental costs, to refer to the Town Council to approve taking up the tenancy.

Members heard that the Finance, Governance and Personnel Committee had met urgently earlier in the day and had agreed to underwrite the rental costs for up to six months which was their recommendation to the Town Council. The Committee had discussed the possibility of using the building to meet some of the office space requirements the Council Office currently faced while the funding application bids were in process.

The recommendation before the Council was therefore to agree to establish a Community Hub as set out by the CDO with an agreement to underwrite the rental costs for up to six months.

Members discussed the issue, with many expressing concern at the timing of the recommendation, in particular the haste with which a decision was being requested, as well as the concern at the public perception of renting a property without a clear plan of action for its short term use. Some raised concerns that the length of time the property was being underwritten for was insufficient to be confident that a funding application would succeed.

Cllr Robert John proposed an **AMENDMENT** that the Council secure funding for a community hub prior to seeking and securing a premises, seconded by Cllr Michael Theodoulou.

In the ensuing vote 5 members voted in favour with 4 against and 2 abstentions. The proposed amendment was therefore agreed.

ACTION: Acting Clerk and CDO

118. To note the following minutes for information:

Date	Meeting
Wednesday 6 th November 2019	Facilities and Assets Committee
Monday 11 th November 2019	Finance, Governance and Personnel Committee
Tuesday 12 th November 2019	Chairs Committee
Wednesday 13 th November 2019	Regeneration and Community Engagement Committee

Cllr Michael Theodoulou **PROPOSED** that the minutes be noted, seconded by Cllr Richard Adler.

In the ensuing vote members voted unanimously in favour of the proposal and it was therefore **RESOLVED** to note the minutes.

119. To consider communications received

None had been received.

120. In camera discussions

Cllr Robert John **PROPOSED** that the meeting move to in camera, seconded by Cllr Lisa Mitchell.

In the ensuing vote 11 members voted in favour. It was therefore **RESOLVED** to move the meeting to in camera.

Louise Robinson, Kevin Williams and Paul Mann left the meeting 8.40pm

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.

114. Consideration of adoption of the Toilet Strategy report.

The Projects Manager advised members of the contents of the report.

Members discussed the figures and information within and possible courses of action.

Cllr Michael Theodoulou **PROPOSED** that the issue of which budget to be used to pay for works was to be referred to the Facilities and Assets Committee for decision, seconded by Cllr Bob Walpole.

In the ensuing vote 11 members voted in favour with 0 against and 0 abstentions. It was therefore **AGREED** to refer the matter to the stated Committee.

ACTION: Ref. to Facilities

a) **To confirm the confidential minutes of the Town Council meeting held on Wednesday 20th November 2019**

The minutes of the above meeting were approved.

Ed Davies left the meeting 8.45pm

b) **Update on staffing issues**

Staffing issues were discussed.

c) **To note the following confidential minutes**

Date	Meeting
Wednesday 6 th November 2019	Facilities and Assets Committee
Monday 11 th November 2019	Finance, Governance and Personnel Committee
Tuesday 12 th November 2019	Chairs Committee
Wednesday 13 th November 2019	Regeneration and Community Engagement Committee

Noted.