

Pembrey and Burry Port Town Council

Minutes Regeneration and Community Engagement Committee Meeting

Wednesday 10th June 2020

Present: Councillors Michael Theodoulou (Chair), Peter Freeman, Robert John, Lisa Mitchell, Karen Morris (Vice Chair), David Owens, Moira Thomas, Karen Trimble, Bob Walpole and Mary Wenman

Non-members present: Councillor John Hedley Jones

In attendance: Huw Thomas (Acting Clerk and RFO), Louise Robinson (Community Development Officer), Ed Davies (Administrative Assistant-Minute Taker)

Via Microsoft Teams 11am to 1.30pm

1. To receive apologies for absence

Apologies had been received from Cllrs Richard Adler, Rachel Evans and Les George.

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

None were declared.

3. To confirm the minutes of the Regeneration and Community Engagement Committee meeting held on Wednesday 11th March 2020

Members discussed a number of changes to provide clarification and simplify the minutes.

Provided the corrections were made, Cllr Bob Walpole **PROPOSED** that the minutes be accepted as an accurate record of the meeting, seconded by Cllr Moira Thomas.

In the ensuing vote 5 members voted in favour with 0 against and 5 abstentions.

Action: Admin Assistant

Cllr David Owens stated his abstention was due to no longer being able to recall the meeting to judge its accuracy. The remaining abstentions were due to those members not being present.

4. To consider any matters arising from the minutes

Pg5 – item 11 - Update on forthcoming events

Members noted that due to the current circumstances some of these events were not held.

5. To agree sub Committee's for the year and their membership

Members noted that as per their previous discussions around reducing the number of meetings, the only Sub-Committee they would retain would be the Planning Sub-Committee.

Members **AGREED** unanimously for the current membership remain in place.

Members **AGREED** unanimously to the appointment of Cllr Moira Thomas as Chair of the Sub-Committee and Cllr John Hedley Jones as the Vice Chair.

Following a request for one additional member Cllr Karen Trimble volunteered to join

Action: Assistant Town Clerk

Members discussed that in light of the extensive capital program they had planned for the coming years, the need for an Capital Program Committee. Many options were considered and it was believed that every Committee had valuable input to make to that discussion and that its membership needed to be different to the Chairs Committee.

Cllr David Owens **PROPOSED** that it be referred to the next Town Council meeting to consider the formation of a new Committee to the Town Council, to be composed of two representatives from each Committee, seconded by Cllr Mary Wenman.

In the ensuing vote, members **AGREED** unanimously to the proposal.

Members discussed who should be the recommended representatives if this committee is established and it was **AGREED** for the Chair and Cllr Lisa Mitchell to fulfil that role.

Action: Assistant Town Clerk

Members noted that they remained able to form working groups and task and finish groups as was required, provided they had defined goals and aims.

6. Consideration of the Committee's budget monitoring report

The RFO highlighted that the report covered the period to the 31st March 2020, namely the end of year and that an adjustment sheet would follow to update the figures for monies received in the 2020/21 financial year that covered costs in the 2019/20 financial year and for costs incurred in the last year but paid for in this.

He asked members to note that the marketing budget would wash into reserves as had been discussed.

In response to a query he confirmed that the £33 spent on stationery for the Community Forums covered the costs for hosting the initial meeting, and so were a legitimate expense of the Council.

A query was raised over the Heritage Board budget, and it was noted that this heading was being moved to the Facilities and Assets Committee budget, so no further discussion was had.

7. Consideration of applications received for financial donations

Bowls Club

The CDO highlighted that this was a request for £150 for a piece of equipment following recent vandalism and damage to the green.

During the discussion of the application, members expressed that the process for purchasing equipment for maintaining the Bowl Club should go via the Facilities and Assets Committee, as the buildings and green were a Town Council asset. The funds from this Committee could be used to support the club in other ways.

It was noted that the club members undertook a large amount of voluntary work regarding maintenance, however many felt that while it was important to support the club in that endeavour, as any purchased equipment would belong to the Council it should be purchased from the correct budget and allow the club to apply for funds to support them not the facility.

Members expressed their wish for the club to be encouraged to engage more with the community and involve younger age groups in their activities. The substantial financial support they had received from the Council over recent years was highlighted, with no evidence of fundraising activities taking place.

Cllr Michael Theodoulou **PROPOSED** that the application be refused, with an explanation that purchasing equipment for a Town Council facility was an issue for the Facilities and Assets Committee and that any repair or maintenance work needed to be addressed there, seconded by Cllr Mary Wenman.

Members **AGREED** unanimously to the proposal.

Action: CDO/RFO

Members **AGREED** unanimously to refer to the Facilities and Assets Committee the issue of clarifying the process to the club and to consider ways of promoting it as a community facility.

Action: ref to Facilities

Members noted that the Chairs of the Facilities and Assets Committee and the Finance, Governance and Personnel Committee would reinstate their regular meetings with the Bowls Club as soon as was possible, to assist them in working with the Council.

Dementia Care Support Group

Members noted that this application had been received in February and that officers had only recently received some of the requested information to allow its consideration. The CDO and RFO highlighted that their report did not give a recommendation to the committee as the application did not specify an amount and the submitted information showed that while they had money in their reserves, their monthly expenses were larger than their income, although insufficient information had been submitted to explain the estimated running costs fully.

Members noted that while there had been no clarification of how previously applied for funds had been spent, this was true for all groups as the Audit Committee, tasked with doing so, had not yet met to work on the follow up process.

It was noted, that as no organisation was meeting at present due to lockdown restrictions, it was likely that their monthly expenditure was not as high as indicated on the form, with consideration given to the original date of submission.

Cllr Michael Theodoulou **PROPOSED** that a decision be deferred until the group could provide the Committee with confirmation of how much money was being requested and what it would be spent on once lockdown restrictions were lifted, seconded by Cllr Mary Wenman.

Members **AGREED** unanimously to the proposal.

Action: CDO/RFO

In response to a query, the CDO confirmed that she had contacted the group recently to ask if there was any help the Council could render, but this offer had been refused at the time.

8. Update on grants applied for/received

The CDO confirmed to members that she had secured £500 from the Tesco Bags fund towards the care packages for the community. An application had been made to the Carmarthenshire Community response fund £1000 with the same aim, but no response had been received yet.

In response to an email from the Places for Nature Fund, the CDO working with the CFS had identified many areas of potential for using it to reach certain Council goals. Together they had submitted an expression of interest for £50,000 which had been welcomed by the Fund who had been impressed with the speed of the response and quality of suggested uses.

The CDO stated that she had submitted the basic form for the Community Foundation Wales Changing Lives Together fund, which would enable the Council to start work on a community recovery plan. This could put a project in place to support the community during and after the current crisis to stimulate recovery. She welcomed any guidance from members for which project or projects it could go towards, such as hot meal provision, cooking lessons or others.

9. Update on the community forums and the next steps

Members discussed whether it would be worthwhile contacting the forum members to see if they would be interested in reconvening them remotely. Members felt that it was worthwhile contacting them and gauging their opinion and ability to meet remotely, with the possibility of carrying on existing work via email and phone where possible given as an example. It was felt that this would demonstrate the Council's commitment to continuing the process started last year, although the nature of any ongoing work would be at the discretion of the Forum Lead.

Cllr Moira Thomas **PROPOSED** that the forum members be contacted to establish their interest and ability to meet remotely, seconded by Cllr Karen Morris.

Members **AGREED** unanimously to the proposal.

Action: CDO

Members discussed whether or not they should share publicly the ongoing work of the forums. Members felt that they needed clarity on what would be shared publicly.

The CDO stated that not long after the next meeting of this Committee, would be the 1st anniversary of the Community Meeting that established the forums, and suggested that it would be a good opportunity to publicise its successes, future plans and work as a recruitment drive.

Members **AGREED** that the CDO, working with the RFO should produce a report highlighting the achievements of the forums and ways of reporting that to the public.

Action: CDO/RFO

Members heard a report from the Resilience Forum as follows:

- A report from the CFS had been requested and received, on pesticide use. The Forum wished to suggest that its proposals become council policy.

Members noted that the procedure was for items referred from the forums to come to this Committee before being passed to the Town Council or the relevant Committee for action.

Cllr Bob Walpole **PROPOSED** that the proposals from the CFS report be referred to the Facilities and Assets Committee for consideration and a recommendation to the Town Council, seconded by Cllr David Owens.

Members **AGREED** unanimously to the proposal

Action: ref to facilities

- The Forum Lead had spoken to the local business forum who are happy to meet someone to discuss ways of cooperative working regarding single use plastics. Contact had also been made with the owners of Caffi Lolfa and the manager of the Co-op who had expressed interest in being a part of the discussion.
- Following reported sightings of a water vole by the canal path an expert from Swansea University has stated he is happy to do a survey with them along the canal.

10. Update on community support to include food banks

Members had received copies of the report prepared by the CDO as well as the weekly updates on the work of the Council.

In addition the CDO reported that she had met with the other Community Development Officers across Carmarthenshire where they had been able to share good practice and ideas, of note were volunteer welfare calls for those vulnerable people living on their own or shielding at home during this time, as well as the work being done to develop recovery plans.

Members commended the work of the CDO and staff, although concern was expressed that there were limited ways of contacting those who were not online about the support the Council was offering. Suggested options to explore were encouraging a “good neighbour” approach, working with existing contact channels such as via the press for promotion, working with social services so they can communicate the available support directly.

Members noted the success of their recent “Coronavirus Update” video on Facebook, and **AGREED** for the Chair to draft another script to put out another.

Action: Chair

11. Consideration of a proposal for a community hub

Members had received copies of the proposal document, as well as an email giving the comments of Cllr Les George. The Chair reminded members of the process such proposals were subjected to, which was that they are discussed at Committee level and if considered a worthwhile proposal are referred to the Town Council with a recommendation. Therefore, no decision would be made at the Committee level.

It was noted that the proposal before them required input from each Committee regarding their areas of delegated authority. For this Committee that would be to discuss the community impact of the idea, while the others will look at affordability, the necessity of an additional facility, or its suitability.

The CDO reminded members of the previously discussed need for this type of facility, and stated that it was very likely that, following the Coronavirus crisis life would look very different for those living in Pembrey and Burry Port. A recovery plan would need to be in place for several years to help those affected and so starting work now would benefit everyone greatly. To provide the necessary services it may be necessary to secure a more central venue with sufficient space to

support a variety of services, including a base for youth projects, a Men's Sheds facility, training facility, prepare hot meals and act as an advice hub via accountable bodies. The suggestion being put forward was to seek to purchase the Cornish Arms building currently for sale to fulfil this role.

The CDO had spoken with the Big Lottery Fund previously based on a 2 year project, but they had expressed interest in supporting a larger project and therefore meet more of the costs. The CDO confirmed that she was preparing a report with greater detail on the anticipated running costs. In closing she stated that the facility would provide some additional jobs and it could act as an additional focal point for drawing people into the centre of town when the shops reopen.

In response to a query the CDO confirmed that the funding support offered by the Big Lottery Fund was not dependent on the named building, but it may be necessary to separate the different elements into a larger number of smaller bids if it was not tied to the purchase of a new building.

Some members raised concerns regarding the building, stating their belief that some of the Council's existing facilities were under utilised and a new building would end up duplicating that, it was also highlighted that there would need to be a thorough risk assessment made for accommodating so many functions in one building which could present a safeguarding issue, and that the disabled access to the building was poor.

Members were agreed that a program aiming to provide the benefits to the community outlined in the report would be welcome, and some suggested it may be better to try and secure the funding to improve and invest in the Council's existing facilities so they could be utilised to meet the aims. It was suggested that a report on the historic usage of the current facilities would be beneficial.

Some felt that there needed to be more within the proposal explaining how it would tackle ongoing sustainability costs and challenges and wished to see more information on that subject before proceeding. It was also expressed that the Council should focus on working closely with the existing youth clubs to tackle the issues faced by young people.

Cllr Lisa Mitchell **PROPOSED** that standing orders be suspended to allow the meeting to proceed beyond the 2-hour limit, seconded by Cllr David Owens.

Members **AGREED** unanimously to the proposal.

In response the CDO stated that staff were already looking at ways of increasing usage across Council facilities which may not be able to work simultaneously with the aims and objectives of a Community Hub. She also reminded members that the youth projects that would be based on the premises would be looking to target young people who don't, won't or can't engage with existing youth clubs and groups or in school settings.

Cllr Michael Theodoulou **PROPOSED** that a task and finish group be set up, to work with the CDO to create a prioritised list of what services and support the Council should offer to the community and assess how and where it will do so, seconded by Cllr Lisa Mitchell.

Members **AGREED** unanimously to the proposal and for the membership to consist of Cllrs Michael Theodoulou, Mary Wenman, Robert John, Moira Thomas, Karen Morris, and Lisa Mitchell.

Action: Assistant Town Clerk

12. Consideration of "Digital Race 2020"

Members had received copies of the document in advance of the meeting. Members noted that it had not been intended to be viewed as a proposal document. Many were supportive of its aims to use 3d printing to develop projects.

Cllr Michael Theodoulou **PROPOSED** that the RFO and CDO contact the authors to seek clarity on what they need and want in terms of support from the Council and what they want to achieve, seconded by Cllr Bob Walpole.

Members **AGREED** unanimously to the proposal.

Action: CDO/RFO to meet

13. Any other urgent business at the discretion of the Chair

The CDO stated that for her to be able to proceed on applying for certain grants, it would be necessary to be a member of Carmarthenshire Volunteer Service (CAVS) which cost £20 a year.

Cllr Moira Thomas **PROPOSED** that the CDO be given permission to purchase the membership, seconded by Cllr Robert John

Members **AGREED** unanimously to the proposal

Action: CDO

Cllr Lisa Mitchell **PROPOSED** that the meeting move in camera, seconded by Cllr David Owens.

Members **AGREED** unanimously to the proposal.

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.

14. To consider the Schedule of accounts

Members discussed town wi-fi project costs and agreed to put it on the agenda for the next meeting.

Action: Assistant Town Clerk

Meeting ended 13.30