

Pembrey and Burry Port Town Council

Regeneration and Community Engagement Committee Meeting

Wednesday 19th August 2020

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

Present: Councillors Michael Theodoulou (Chair), Peter Freeman, Robert John (arr. 10.02am), Lisa Mitchell, Karen Morris (Vice Chair), David Owens, Moira Thomas, Karen Trimble (arr. 10.13am), Bob Walpole (arr. 10.02am) and Mary Wenman (arr. 10.02am).

Absent: Councillor Rachel Evans

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

Via Microsoft Teams 10am to 12.17pm

1. To receive apologies for absence

Apologies had been received from Cllrs Richard Adler 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 8th July, Monday 13th July and Tuesday 28th July 2020

Provided some spelling errors were corrected, Cllr Karen Morris **PROPOSED**, seconded by Cllr Peter Freeman that the minutes of the meeting on Wednesday 8th July were an accurate record of the meeting.

Members **RESOLVED** unanimously in favour.

Cllrs Robert John, Bob Walpole and Mary Wenman joined the meeting at 10.02am

Cllr Lisa Mitchell **PROPOSED**, seconded by Cllr Moira Thomas, that the minutes of the meeting of Monday 13th July were an accurate record of the meeting.

Cllrs Peter Freeman and David Owens stated their intention to abstain due to not being present for the meeting.

In the ensuing vote 7 voted in favour, with 0 against and 2 abstentions. It was therefore **RESOLVED** to accept the minutes as an accurate record of the meeting.

Cllr Bob Walpole **PROPOSED**, seconded by Cllr Robert John, that the minutes of Wednesday the 28th July were an accurate record of the meeting.

Cllr Karen Morris intended to abstain due to not being present for the meeting.

In the ensuing vote 8 members voted in favour with 0 against and 1 abstention. It was therefore **RESOLVED** to accept the minutes as an accurate record.

4. To consider any matters arising from the minutes

8th July -re: apprenticeships

Members were informed that in relation to the horticulture apprenticeship, the CFS had been in discussions with Coleg Sir Gâr, as they did not run the exact course to fit. He had worked with them to select the best modules available and anticipated the appointment to be made in September.

Members briefly discussed the possibility of an apprenticeship around grounds maintenance, noting that it may be better to ensure the already planned for apprenticeships are successful before expanding. There was also a query as to the capacity for staff to make it a worthwhile exercise and members requested that the Clerk look at and assess that in due course.

ACTION: Clerk

In relation to the office based trainee post, the CDO advised that while discussions with Coleg Sir Gâr had started, they were holding until the GCSE results were announced on Thursday as it would be a significant determining factor in how to proceed.

On the Town Wifi report, the Clerk advised members that he had not yet had time to prepare the necessary information.

5. Consideration of the Committee's budget monitoring report

The RFO highlighted that, as previously there was no income while there had been some spending on storage of Christmas lights, which was part of a previously agreed contract. Spending on Community Support was now shown in its own line, with a transfer from the events budget. There was an anticipated grant funding for community support due later in the year which would also result in a new line under income.

6. To consider the priorities of the Regeneration and Community Engagement Committee

Members noted that this Committee was differentiated from the other Committees in that it was primarily outward facing with its very name reflecting all aspects of "regeneration" in a holistic sense which the Committee should consider a primary objective.

It was noted that in the current crisis, it would be difficult to consider the priorities in short, mid or long terms. In light of that a strong focus on reflecting the voice of the community in meeting the needs of the community in the present was necessary.

Cllr Karen Trimble joined the meeting at 10.13am

Members discussed ways of assessing the public's needs, including surveys, via the community forums and public meetings.

In relation to the above members noted the costs attached to conducting surveys; that the community forums had not yet been able to meet physically since prior to Covid restrictions, while attempts the meet digitally had met with some technical difficulties. It was noted that large scale public meetings were not likely to be allowed soon too.

The CDO stated that at the limited Economy forum meeting they had chosen to focus on employment and the harbour, with the aim to look at a business/jobs fair and a separate training provider fair. The harbour considerations would focus on the economic possibilities related to developments around the harbour. She advised that none of these could take place until larger gatherings were allowed.

Members discussed whether physical meetings could take place again if all necessary precautions were in place. The Clerk advised that current restrictions meant that a maximum of 30 people could meet in the same room provided it was large enough, and that the Burry Port Memorial Hall was a suitable venue for that. He also stated that given the numbers of likely attendees, they would possibly be able to consider use of the Senior Citizen's Hall.

Members noted that social media could be used to gauge the community's priorities, with environmental issues, litter, the harbour and parking facilities the main areas of concern they had each noticed recently.

Consideration was given to efforts to arrange meetings with mixed, digital and physical attendance, with members noting decisions taken at previous Ordinary Meetings on this subject.

Cllr Michael Theodoulou **PROPOSED**, seconded by Cllr Peter Freeman that officers take steps to allow the forums to reconvene physically.

In the ensuing vote 9 members voted in favour, with 0 against and 1 abstention.

ACTION: CDO

Members discussed further the concerns being expressed on social media and their options for response. Some felt that previous actions in sending letters to the County Council had not always resulted in a positive response or action for the community. Some members raised concern at giving too much precedence to social media conversation as they believed many of those currently being most vocal did not live in Pembrey or Burry Port, and that there were other matters that were also of concern to the public.

The Clerk reminded members that in the last two weeks, the Council had written to the Chief Executive of the County Council twice, covering the subjects of the harbour toilets and bins, and to arrange a meeting to discuss a solution to the harbour toilets. No response other than to acknowledge receipt had been returned as yet.

Members discussed other means of securing action, including raising publicity and awareness via the press and other means, although it was noted that physical protest could only be limited at present. Some members advocated for seeking to do the work the community wanted where the County would or could not, although it was highlighted that to do so would incur greater costs which the community would have to pay for, and therefore approval from them would be needed. Members heard that historically when the Town Council had directly challenged the County Council for action, it had not ended with a positive result.

The Clerk interjected at this point to inform members that the Director of Community Services, on behalf of the Chief Executive had just responded via email to the previous communications. He proceeded to read the response to all members.

The letter outlined a number of actions the County Council was taking or was prepared to take and confirmed that they would be happy to meet with the Town Council to discuss a solution.

Members were reminded that they had commissioned a consultation report on solutions to the toilets issue, but that this meeting would be a welcome first step to taking a positive action. Members felt that the meeting should be with anyone from this Committee who wished to attend.

7. To consider budget revision

Members noted that each Committee was going through this process but that this was the only one which was able to reduce spending as part of that adjustment. The Clerk/RFO advised members throughout their discussions.

Following discussion members **RESOLVED** unanimously to reduce the income target to £0, but to include a line for grant money income.

In relation to expenditure members discussed what areas needed attention and **RESOLVED** unanimously to reduce the Marketing and Promotion budget from £6000 to £2000.

Members **RESOLVED** unanimously to reduce the floral displays budget from £12000 to £2000.

Following discussion of the needs of local organisations at present, members felt the Council would be unlikely to reach its budget for local donations given they had not met that target in previous years and **RESOLVED** unanimously to reduce it to £1000.

Members noted the similarities of the situation regarding Community Grants and **RESOLVED** unanimously to reduce the budget to £5000

Following advice from the CDO members **RESOLVED** to revise the community events budget to £4000. This would allow the Christmas festival a budget of £2000 and £1000 for Pembrey Light switch-on in the hope that those events can happen in some form. In the same vein £1000 was also kept in the budget for the Senior Citizens Lunch.

Members **RESOLVED** to make no change to the Blue Plaque budget.

Members **RESOLVED** to make no change to the Digital Community Project.

The Clerk confirmed that this would lead to a reduction of £24500 to the total budget.

ACTION: Clerk/RFO

8. Consideration of applications received for financial donations

None had been received.

9. Update on grants applied for/received

The CDO stated that the Places for Nature grant had been formally awarded, with the Council due to receive the full award of £50,000 in two payments, with the first to arrive soon, to allow for initial ground works to begin. She reported that the Project Manager was awaiting quotes from three contractors to do the work.

In response to a query the CDO stated that public consultation would be continuing, with local residents having received a letter drop earlier in the year, with more to follow.

Cllr Michael Theodoulou **PROPOSED** seconded by Cllr Moira Thomas for this item to be retained on the agenda and for it to include a report in advance of the meeting.

Members **RESOLVED** unanimously to the proposal

ACTION: CDO

10. Update on Community forums

In relation to the Resilience Forum, Members heard that it had not been able to meet due to a technology issue, but that they had had to delay the start of the Water Vole Survey work as the initial Health and Safety training could only be delivered online at present. The work was hoped to be started in the New Year.

In relation to the Health Forum, members heard that it had managed to meet digitally but had nothing to report.

11. Update on community support

It was reported that the Fruity Friday programme had proven popular, with the idea now being expanded to include the ingredients for fruit smoothies. Members also heard that the Teddy Bears Picnic event had proceeded well, and provided those who attended an opportunity for engagement.

The sandcastle competition had been had to be altered as permission could not be given by the Millennium Coastal Park to use the beach as the County Council had a blanket ban on public events at present. The change was for children to collect a flag from the Town Council office, for them to take to the beach and build a castle, with their effort then being posted to the Council's social media as an entry. Each collected flag was accompanied by information from the RNLI about sea and beach safety. The Competition was open until the 28th August and had been warmly received by the public so far.

Following the success of the Bike Check event, Pembrey and Burry Port Bicycle Club members had asked to hold another at Pembrey Memorial Hall, which was being arranged for the 24th August. Members were advised that there was no cost implication as they still fell within the budget of the first event. As at the previous event, people booked a time slot via the CDO with 20 minutes given per bike.

Members next heard of an opportunity to join in a scheme being run by CBSA known as Foodshare.

Cllrs Michael Theodoulou and Peter Freeman, declared an interest in this item due to their roles within the organisation, and left the meeting at 11.25am

Cllr Karen Morris as Vice Chair took over the role of Chair for the remainder of this item.

The CDO gave an outline of the scheme to members. It was currently active in 8 other Council areas where any resident within it would be eligible to join in the scheme. By doing so they would pay a "subscription" type charge of £3.50 a week to receive a hamper with £10-£15 worth of goods each week. Participants would not however know what was in their hamper until it arrived as it was dependent on what the Foodshare scheme had been supplied with. Any fresh produce included would be provided on top of the base value of the hamper goods.

The CDO confirmed that CBSA did not require use of any Council premises or financial assistance, and this was only a request for support as a courtesy and for the Council to be able to send a

Councillor to take part in the steering group to keep it operating well. She also confirmed that there were no eligibility requirements to take part

Members noted that because of the publicly known links between some Councillors and there may be some concern in the community. Members discussed whether the community forums should be consulted to gauge their concerns, however many were keen for the community to benefit from a good scheme.

Cllr Lisa Mitchell **PROPOSED**, seconded by Cllr David Owens that the matter be referred to the Town Council with a recommendation to participate, and for Cllr Karen Morris to sit on the steering group.

In the ensuing vote 8 members voted in favour with 0 against and 2 abstentions. The proposal was therefore **RESOLVED**.

ACTION: Deputy Town Clerk

Cllrs Michael Theodoulou and Peter Freeman returned to the meeting at 11.36am

Members were informed that following their approval at a previous meeting the advert for a cook for the Meals on Wheels scheme had been sent out. There had already been some expressions of interest with a planned start on 7th October.

Members discussed the use of Council staff for deliveries for the pharmacies, noting that demand had dropped sharply as shielding restrictions had been lifted.

Cllr Lisa Mitchell **PROPOSED**, seconded by Cllr Karen Morris that a letter be sent to the pharmacies informing them of the Councils intention for its staff to return to their regular duties from 1st September but to contact the Council should other challenges arise in the future.

Members **RESOLVED** unanimously in favour.

ACTION: Clerk

Members discussed whether or not the Council should make a statement to the community's students on their exam results. Some were in favour of making a congratulatory statement while others were in favour of keeping politics out of the situation.

Cllr Michael Theodoulou **PROPOSED**, seconded by Cllr Bob Walpole that the Council make a statement and gave a draft to consider.

In the ensuing vote 4 members voted in favour with 6 against. The Committee therefore **RESOLVED** not to make a statement.

Members discussed a proposed sports day event being arranged by the CDO. They heard details of what precautions were being taken to minimise the risks, with limited numbers per year group, strict limits on accompanying adults as well as freely available hand sanitizers, 1st aid and toilet.

Some members were concerned at the risks of community transfer of Covid-19 at the event and felt that those concerns outweighed the potential morale benefits for the community. It was also stated that there was a risk of a large audience even if only 1 parent accompanied their child into the competition area. Others stated that they should trust their staff to make appropriate safety arrangements and that they felt the morale benefits would be worthwhile.

Members heard that the CDO had already received a lot of public interest on this matter as a notice had been put up already to advertise it. She also stated that she did not anticipate the attendance to get higher than they were planning for.

Members discussed whether their previously given approval to begin organising the event had also included permission to promote it. Some members stated they wished to see a full Risk Assessment before a final decision was taken, but that there would be a delay until the CFS had returned to work from his annual leave.

Cllr Michael Theodoulou **PROPOSED**, seconded by Cllr Karen Morris that only qualified individuals should undertake Risk Assessments.

Members **RESOLVED** unanimously in favour.

ACTION: Clerk

Members discussed whether or not current regulations for sporting events applied to this type of event, but no certainty was got. There was also a discussion about the current status of community transfer of Covid-19 in Wales and Carmarthenshire.

Cllr Peter Freeman **PROPOSED**, seconded by Cllr Bob Walpole that the event be allowed to proceed.

Cllrs David Owens and Robert John requested that voting proceed as a recorded vote.

Members voted as follows.

Cllrs Peter Freeman, Lisa Mitchell and Bob Walpole voted in favour.

Cllrs Robert John, Karen Morris, David Owens, Karen Trimble and Mary Wenman voted against.

Cllrs Michael Theodoulou and Moira Thomas abstained from voting.

The Committee therefore **RESOLVED** for the event to be cancelled and the Clerk was asked to draft a notice for the public informing them of this decision.

ACTION Clerk

Members noted that a number of decisions had been taken at a task and finish group, which had then been acted upon by officers, although authority had not been given by this committee. Although these actions had not been controversial or against members wishes, it revealed a process and authority issue that needed discussion.

The Clerk stated that one of the issues, namely the Meals on Wheels requiring a cook had been discussed and agreed by this Committee, which satisfied his concerns of authority for officers to act.

Some members expressed concerns however, stating that personnel and employment was not within the remit of this Committee and those elements should have been overseen by the Finance, Governance and Personnel Committee. Many members stated their support for officers' actions, highlighting that if the item had been discussed and decided on by this Committee but with unclear instructions, this was their responsibility.

Cllr Michael Theodoulou **PROPOSED**, seconded by Cllr David Owens that the process issue be referred to the Chairs Committee to provide guidance on this grey area.

Members **RESOLVED** unanimously in favour

ACTION: Ref to Chairs Cmte

Cllr Bob Walpole **PROPOSED** that Officer's prepare all of the necessary paperwork regarding the decisions in question for the Chairs of the Regenerations and Community Engagement and Finance, Governance and Personnel Committees to consider and approve, seconded by Cllr Robert John.

Members **RESOLVED** unanimously in favour.

ACTION: Clerk

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

None was raised.

Cllr David **PROPOSED** that the meeting move in camera to allow decisions to be taken, seconded by Cllr Peter.

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.

13. To consider the Schedule of accounts

Members received a brief synopsis of the items on the schedule from the RFO.

Meeting ended 12.17pm