

MINUTES OF HARLECH COMMUNITY COUNCIL MEETING HELD AT THE OLD LIBRARY, HARLECH AT 7.30 P.M. ON 04.03.24

APOLOGIES

Cllrs. Thomas Mort, Ceri Griffiths and Gordon Howie.

PRESENT

Cllrs. Edwina Evans (Chairman), Christopher Braithwaite (Vice Chairman), Tegid John, Rhian Corps, Martin Hughes, Giles Bentham, Wendy Williams, and Cllrs. Annwen Hughes and Gwynfor Owen (Gwynedd Council).

There was 4 members of the public present.

Mr. and Mrs. James Maxwell attended the meeting for a while to show the two blue plaques that the Old Library committee had been able to purchase with help from the Community Council. It was reported that these plaques will be unveiled on the 4th of next month at 11.00am and they would be pleased to know who will be representing the Community Council to unveil one of these plaques. The Chairman of the Council was unable to attend and the Vice Chairman was unsure at this time.

MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on February 5th 2024 were found to be correct.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Cllr. Martin Hughes stated that this minute regarding HAL statement in the January minutes needed clarification. Presumably it's a reference to the allegation of a breach in the Code of Conduct in the sentence in the January minutes that reads 'There had been discussion about the payment of a financial contribution to HAL after the end of March this year and a statement had been created and Councillors had agreed that the Clerk of each Council send this out to all Councillors and ask them to vote by Thursday evening the 21st with their decision, the email sent to all Councillors was confidential and stated that members of the other Councils expressed disappointment that this information had been disclosed to a HAL Board member and because of this they believed that this Councillor had breached the Council's Code of Conduct.'

Cllr. Martin Hughes stated that the audit report needs to say that it is in the public interest about the fraud of £9,000

I asked that the January minutes be amended to make it clear that the Audit Wales report was exceptionally a 'public interest' report rather than a routine report, \as stated in the report title 'Report in the Public Interest: Failures in financial management and governance and losses incurred – Harlech Community Council'. However the February minute above is liable to be read as if the fraud itself was in the public interest!

Cllr. Giles Bentham stated that he had received an email from the Internal Auditor about what had been said at last month's meeting of the Council that the Internal Auditors had stated that this type of fraud happens all the time. Because Cllr. Bentham was not willing to disclose the contents of the email the matter could not be discussed further. Cllr. Bentham asked if it would be possible to obtain a copy of the Council's annual statement for the year 2022/23 and it was agreed to send a copy to all.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Cllr Edwina Evans declared an interest in the financial application of The Old Library and Memorial Hall and signed a Personal Declaration of Interest document and did not take part in the discussion.

Cllr Rhian Corps declared an interest in the Ysgol Tanycastell financial application and signed a Personal Declaration of Interest document and did not take part in the discussion.

Cllr Martin Hughes declared an interest in the Old Library's financial application and signed a Personal Declaration of Interest document and did not take part in the discussion.

GWYNEDD COUNCIL MATTERS

The following report was received from Cllr. Annwen Hughes and Cllr. Gwynfor Owen – Cllr. Annwen Hughes reported that since the last meeting that she had received a reply from the Police regarding matters which she had raised at the meeting with them and they stated that they will ask the Traffic Warden to visit the town more often and also that they will arrange for a camera or car to go down Beach Road. She had been to see the Min y Don toilets and had been told by two who were working on them that they were to finish painting them by the end of this month and also that any other necessary work that needed to be carried out on them. She had received a copy of an email the Traffic Department, Gwynedd Council had received asking if it would be possible to remove the bollards at the crossroads of Ffordd Uchaf and Ffordd Bron y Graig. Cllr. Hughes stated that the bollards in question had been there for many years and were removed when static caravans needed to go to Pant Mawr caravan park because they couldn't get past Rock Terrace, and also she stated that no one else had complained about these bollards before. Cllr. Gwynfor Owen reported that he had been told and was concerned that the maritime team will be cut and maybe later stop and also Natural Resources Wales will not clear access for emergency vehicles to the beach and he has a meeting with both in two weeks. It has been reported that Council tax will rise by 9.54% with £8.4m of cuts. He had attended a meeting with Rhian Elin George of Gwynedd Council and Mr. and Mrs. Reg Chapman to discuss where the best place would be to place a piece of art in the town which was made available through a grant from Gwynedd Council. Three locations had been earmarked namely at the entrance to the church, Bron y Graig Isaf car park and on the roundabout near Ysgol Ardudwy and a task group needed to be created to discuss this further and Cllrs. Christopher Braithwaite and Rhian Corps agreed to be a part of this.

MATTERS ARISING

Budget Plan

It was reported that the Council had spent £84,879.20 (which included bank charges) since the start of the new financial year and this was £6,194.39 more expenditure than what was earmarked in the budget for the year.

2024 Projects

Cllr. Christopher Braithwaite reported that he had no update on the above and he would contact the various groups in the next two weeks. The Chair reported that she had visited the tennis courts and there was a bit of a mess there and it was agreed that new nets needed to be purchased.

Cllr. Giles Bentham reported that he and Cllr. Gordon Howie had visited the allotments and had met some of the allotment tenant and they had received two quotes to do the work there. The Clerk further reported that she had received a quote as well and she had sent these on to Gwynedd Council and she had received a reply together with a grant acceptance letter and it was agreed to sign this and send it back to them.

Opening of Grass Cutting Tenders

The Clerk reported that she had received 2 tenders to carry out the above work one from Mr. Meirion Griffith, Islwyn Talsarnau for £14.00 per hour to cut the grass on the public footpaths, Llyn y Felin playing field and the public cemetery and another one from Mr. Llion Kerry, Min y Ddol, Harlech for £20.00 per hour to cut the grass on the public footpaths, Llyn y Felin playing field and the public cemetery. It was agreed to accept Mr. Meirion Griffith's tender. It was also agreed to accept the price of Mr. Gareth John Williams to cut the grass in the king George playing field grass and the football pitch again this year which is £64 for cutting the football field, £40 for cutting around the swings and £92 to cut the rest of the field. It was agreed to accept this tender. It was agreed to accept this tender. It was agreed that the tender forms need to be reviewed for next year.

HAL

Cllr. Christopher Braithwaite reported that he had attended a meeting that was held in the village hall, Llanbedr on the 14th of this month between the Community Councils of the area so as to discuss the way forward with HAL. The Clerk had sent copies of HAL accounts up to the end of December last year and also up to the end of January this year to every Member and also reported that another meeting was going to be held between the Community Councils and HAL on the 22nd of this month, but the Clerk informed the Members that this meeting had been cancelled.

Penygraig Land

The Clerk reported that she had asked Mr. Edwards if he could arrange for the Council to have a risk assessment and survey carried out and she had received a reply stating that they should contact Gwynedd Council about this. After a discussion it was agreed to contact Mr. Arwel Williams from Tom Parry to ask if he would be able to carry out this work.

Election of Councillor

The Clerk reported that she had been informed by the Electoral Officer that a request for an election had been received by him and the notice of this shall commence on the 12th of this month and shall expire on the 20th. If more than one name will have been received by him an election will be held on the 18th of April.

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

No applications received since the last meeting of the Council.

TREASURER'S REPORT

The Treasurer reported that there was £1,547.42 in the current account and £92,216.01 in the reserve account.

Invoices needing payment since last meeting

Mrs Kim Howie	- £25.99 – monthly payment for administration of Council website
Gwynedd Council	- £2,626.20 – Community Council election in December
Mr. Joe Patton	- £33.99 - goods for the wildflower community garden
Llais Ardudwy	- £20.00 - advert for grass cutting tenders (February edition)
Woodland Trust	- £1.20 – rent for signage in Coed Llechwedd
Welsh Water	- £396.60 - public toilets near the Castle
Mrs Annwen Hughes	- £882.00 (6 month wages) & £381.10 (6 months costs) = £1,263.10

Applications for financial contributions

Harlech & Ardudwy Leisure	- £3,500.00 – precept proposal (monthly payment x 2).
Cylch Meithrin Harlech	- £2,000
Friends of Tan y Castell School	- £3,000
Old Library Committee	- £1,000
Memorial Hall Committee	- £1,000
Meirionnydd YFC	– None as a balance sheet was not received
Mrs Iona Foster	- None as a balance sheet was not received and also the application was not very clear

The above payments were processed by the Vice Chairman, Cllr. Christopher Braithwaite and Cllr. Tegid John approved the payments and permission was granted to the Clerk/Treasurer to make payment on line or by cheque at the end of the meeting.

It was agreed that the Treasurer would transfer £20,000 from the deposit account to the current account

Monies received since last meeting

None received since the last meeting. 783.....Chairman

Cllr. Martin Hughes stated that he had concerns with the Council's budget plan for the 2024/25 financial year due to the high sum of £167,000. Cllr. Christopher Braithwaite stated that the Council did not have to spend this particular amount of money. It was discussed that the Council would need to prioritise what is needed once the project work is undertaken with safety issues been addressed as a priority. It was suggested the Council prioritise the projects in order to determine what can be delivered. It was agreed that if the full budget was spent it would leave us with too little reserves and that it will be reviewed and monitored.

CORRESPONDANCE

Ms Emma Howie

The Clerk reported that she had received a letter of resignation from the above due to personal matters. It was agreed to forward this letter to the Electoral Department at Gwynedd Council. Members declared disappointment that Ms Emma Howie had decided to resign and the Clerk was asked to send her a letter of thanks.

Gwynedd Council – Environment Department

Received a letter from the above informing the Council that they are carrying out the deceration of Min y Don public toilets, replacing stiles for pedestrian gates, repairing gates and repair/constructing 2 bridges on public footpath number 27. The Our Area Tidying Up Team will also be visiting the area from the 25th until the 29th of this month.

Snowdonia National Park

Received a letter from the above inviting Members to attend a meeting over zoom on the 20th of this month in order to receive an update on the process of reviewing the Local Development Plan and consider introducing an Article 4 Direction. The Clerk reported that she had already forwarded this letter to Members. Cllr. Christopher Braithwaite stated that he had an interest to attend this meeting.

ANY OTHER MATTER

Concern was voiced that the fence was still had not been repaired on the roadside near The Morfa Shop in the bottom of Harlech.

It was stated that it was necessary to discuss keeping Min y Don toilets open throughout the year and it was agreed to discuss this further when the precept is set next financial year.

Cllr. Martin Hughes informed the Members that an Ardal Ni meeting was being held on the 7th of this month at 3.30pm.

Cllr. Annwen Hughes reported that she had been told that the 20m.p.a signs located on the way into the town near Llwyn had been painted over with black paint. She had contacted Gwynedd Council about this and had been told that they will try to clean up the signs or replace them. She had also discussed with Gwynedd Council that the Community Council would be willing to contribute towards the cost of installing a crossing near Ty Canol.

SIGNED.....Chairman

DATE.....

784.