

MINUTES OF HARLECH COMMUNITY COUNCIL MEETING HELD AT THE OLD LIBRARY, HARLECH AT 7.30 P.M. ON 03.06.24

APOLOGIES

Cllrs. Tegid John (Vice Chairman), Thomas Mort, Gordon Howie, James Maxwell.

PRESENT

Cllrs. Christopher Braithwaite (Chairman), Rhian Corps, Ceri Griffiths, Edwina Evans, Martin Hughes, Giles Bentham, Reg Chapman, Wendy Williams, and Cllr. Annwen Hughes and Gwynfor Owen (Gwynedd Council).

There were 5 members of the public present at the meeting.

CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and went on to explain that any other business had been removed from the agenda because, following a meeting with One Voice Wales, he was told that including this item on the agenda was not good practice.

In accordance with Financial Regulation 4.5 (as amended 13 May 2024) expenditure was authorised by the Clerk with the agreement of the Chairman and Vice Chairman as urgent work had to be carried out on a tree that needed attention on Bron y Graig nature trail for £400 and also urgent work on one of the toilets which was leaking in the public toilets near the memorial hall for £75 and also electrical work is needed to be carried out in these toilets and he will contact an electrician to carry out these works.

He asked if it would be possible to have items to be included on the agenda for the next meeting sent to the Clerk 3 days before the agenda was sent out and everyone agreed to this.

The Chairman stated that he will not tolerate any misconduct in the meetings.

The Chairman informed the Members that after receiving a request a translator would be attending Council meetings so it will be able to convey the meetings through the medium of Welsh and English.

The Chairman informed the Members that one member of the public had asked to address the meeting and Ms Annie O'Brien was invited to speak. Ms O'Brien stated that the Council regularly breached the Standing Orders and that this needed to be changed now and not later to protect the Council.

Following the Council's own Standing Orders and Financial Regulations

Following the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 : Statutory Guidance for Community and Town Councils

Following financial and accounting good practice on budgeting, monitoring, reserves, and spending

Following recommended best practice as specified by "Un Llais Cymru".

Ensuring accurate, impartial and unbiased minutes of all meetings are published.

Updating the website so it is properly structured and documents easy to locate including: removing documents relating to Llanfair; ensuring links to public documents work; a calendar of meetings and a note welcoming public attendance and explaining any notice needed.

She was grateful for the work Councillors were doing although recently significant damage had been done to the Council following the scam. Welsh Government body Audit Wales investigated and published a "Report in the public interest". She asked if a resolution would be passed by the Council to follow the rules.

The Chairman responded that the Council was already following some of the points outlined above and also it was informed that the removal of documents to do with Llanfair Community is done. The Chairman asked Members to obey and abide by the Standing Orders.

MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on May 13th 2024 were found to be correct by the majority of Members, but Cllr. Martin Hughes stated that he did not find the minutes correct and had e-mailed the Members outlining the amendments that should be made to them.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Cllrs. Martin Hughes and Giles Bentham were not satisfied with what had been written in the minutes regarding certain matters and they had sent an amendment to be included in the minutes to all Members. There was disagreement with this because some Members stated that what was in the minutes was sufficient. There was a vote on whether the amendment was to be included or not with 5 in favour of not including it and 3 in favour.

Cllr. Martin Hughes stated that it is necessary to include in the minutes about the matter to do with the quotations of the Council's inquiry that he was acting on behalf of the Community Council in this matter.

It was agreed that the draft minutes needed to be sent to all Members and asked to respond within 5 working days if they had any comments to make on them. 'Everyone agreed to this apart from Cllr. Martin Hughes.

Cllr. Martin Hughes referred to the event that had taken place in the town yesterday the 2nd of this month when a Blue Plaque was unveiled to commemorate local war hero, Major Bryan Hilton-Jones M.C., and the commandos of X-Troop. The ceremony was attended by both the Lord Lieutenant and High Sheriff of Gwynedd together with members of the families, four community councillors and numerous residents and visitors. No one had seen such an event taking place in the town before. The Chairman stated that he would be pleased if Members let him know if they attend events on behalf of the Council.

Cllr. Martin Hughes informed the Members that Mr. Martin Hanks of Bangor whose £1000 quotation for the investigation had been accepted at the May Council meeting, was ready to commence work. He asked for the Council's consent to him contacting the Clerk and others involved and had agreed to come to the next Council meeting to discuss the Council's investigation and everyone agreed to this and for Cllr. Hughes to ask him to come to the meeting at 7.00 p.m.

Cllr. Reg Chapman informed the Members that a meeting of the Harlech Public Art Project led by Cyngor Gwynedd -was being held on the 6th of this month and that the project budget had been increased from £10,000 to £20,000 for a site in Parc Brongraig.

It was agreed that a meeting of the play park sub-committee and of the finance sub-committee should be held before the next Council meeting.

Cllr. Giles Bentham reported that, following a site visit with and advice from a RSPB volunteer, grant aided major work on the allotments was postponed until the nesting season was over (probably August/September). Disturbance of nesting birds is an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

No Member declared an interest on any matter.

Cllr. Martin Hughes stated that following the recent training on the Code of Conduct that he had attended that he was told that Members attending a meeting of an external organisation on behalf of the Council did not have to declare an interest when discussing matters to do with this organisation because they were not members of the committee, but Members who were part of the external organisation's committee would declare an interest when discussing matters to do with the organisation.

It was agreed to include a list of Members interest for the last financial year on the Council's website.

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 been made aware that the white lines and double yellow lines in part of the town needed repainting and that she had contacted Gwynedd Council with regards to this, she had been informed that the toilets in Bron y Graig Isaf car park had been closed due to a blockage but these had now been reopened. Cllr. Hughes was asked to contact the Our Area Tidy Towns team and ask them to tidy up the steps leading down to Pentre'r Efail.

Cllr. Gwynfor Owen reported that the path leading down to the beach had been cleared by Natural Resources Wales, he had attended a social event with volunteers of the triathlon, he had attended the unveiling of the blue plaque yesterday and that he had spoken at the event on behalf of Gwynedd Council and he wanted to congratulate everyone involved in planning this event. Concern was voiced that two disabled parking spaces had been lost in upper Bron y Graig car park as a result of the spaces been taken up by the electric charging points and it was agreed that a site meeting should be held to discuss the restructuring of this car park. He had received complaints about Williams Homes lorries using Ty Canol estate as a turn around point but this had now stopped.

MATTERS ARISING

Budget Plan

It was reported that the Council had spent £8,751.54 (which included bank charges) since the start of the new financial year and this was £30,541.96 less expenditure than what was earmarked in the budget for the year. The Chairman stated that following a meeting with One Voice Wales Officers that he had been made aware that including the above in the minutes was good practice and not many Councils were doing this.

Public Benches

Cllr. Wendy Williams reported that she was in the process of drawing up a list of the benches that needed attention but had not yet finished and it was agreed that she forwarded this list to the Clerk when completed. Cllr. Reg Chapman stated that the Council had a duty to also maintain the benches that had been placed in memory in various places by families but it was stated that this was the responsibility of the families and the Chairman was asked to contact One Voice Wales so as to obtain clarification with regards to this matter. Cllr. Rhian Corps agreed to help Cllr. Williams to go around the rest of the benches.

Christmas Lights

The Chairman reported that the e-mail from the previous meeting regarding the above matter had been sent to all Members also that he had asked Mr. Geraint Williams about the price of the lights and he had received a reply from Mr. Williams stating that he had around 20 lights subject to them been tested and the price would be £1,250. It was agreed to send a letter to Mr. Williams stating subject to the lights having a pat test and the quantity available that the Community Council would purchase them. Everyone agreed to this.

Cyfeillion Ellis Wynne

The Chairman reported that all Members had received an email from Cllr. Martin Hughes along with a copy of the letter that had been sent by Gwynedd Council to the above in 2010. The Chairman stated further that he had spoken to Sian Llywelyn of the Friends and they had discussed holding a meeting between the Friends, Gwynedd Council and the Community Council.

Fence surrounding King George playing field

The Chairman asked Cllr. Reg Chapman to take the lead regarding the above matter and it was agreed to discuss this matter when the play park sub committee was meeting.

Credit Card for the Council

The Chairman stated that he had asked for this item to be put on the agenda because he believes making some payments with a credit card would be safer. This was agreed and the Clerk was asked to make enquiries with the bank.

Clerk's Wages

The Chairman stated that he had asked for this item to be put on the agenda because the Clerk was not getting a fair wage.

It was agreed to discuss the above matter at the end of the meeting.

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

None come to hand since last meeting

RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICER

The Responsible Financial Officer reported that there was £42,486.13 in the current account and £72,596.60 in the reserve account.

Invoices needing payment since last meeting

Mrs Kim Howie - £25.99 – monthly payment for administration of Council website
Mr. G. J. Williams - £260.00 - cut grass King George playing field, play park and football field (x2).

Mr. Cameron May - £75.00 – repair leak in public toilets by memorial hall
One Voice Wales - £40.00 - Councillor training
Mrs Yvonne Jones - £290.00 - clean public toilets near memorial hall
Gwynedd Council - £57.32 - tennis courts rates
Mr. Tom Edwards - £400.00 - cut and clear dead tree on Bron y Graig nature trail

Applications for financial contributions

Harlech & Ardudwy Leisure - £1,824.75 – precept proposal (monthly payment).

The above payments were processed by Cllr. Ceri Griffiths and Cllr. Rhian Corps 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.

Monies received since last meeting

None come to hand since the last meeting.

It was agreed to pay the invoice for translation services once the Responsible Financial Officer had received it

The Responsible Financial Officer reported further that she had sent the information required to the Internal Auditor but had not yet received a report. She had been informed by the Internal Auditor that the Council needed to discuss dual authorisation or 'dual control' and it was agreed that the Responsible Financial Officer would ask for more details with regards to this at the bank.

She also stated that she had been looking at the Council's current bank mandate and that some names needed to be removed and new ones needed to be included. It was agreed to remove those that no longer had any connection with the Council and add the names of the Chairman and Vice Chairman.

CORRESPONDENCE

Gwynedd Council – Economic Department

Received an email from Anna Lewis, Community Support Officer stating that she is currently working with Byw Iach and Sports Wales on a project to promote physical activity opportunities in the community in Harlech. One part of this is "Gall Genod Harlech" – a programme of activities for girls that takes place after school. Stating that part of the project is looking at the facilities and resources that exist in the community and during their last visit, Alun and Ffion (Byw Iach) noticed the playground next to the Leisure Centre. They understood that these are the responsibility of the Community Council and asking what is the use of the fenced area with the floodlights. Also stating that groups involved in rugby and football have expressed a need for mobile floodlights in the area and asking if the Community Council would be interested in funding these. It was agreed that the Council needed more information with regards to this matter before agreeing to purchasing them.

Gwynedd Council – Legal Department

Received a reply from Karen Elizabeth Duggan from the above Department regarding the Lease of the public toilets near the memorial hall and stating unfortunately, there is no simplified version. This version is the standard Council Lease and therefore cannot be modified. Also stating that she would forward this email on to Gethin Vaughan Jones so that you can discuss the terms of the length of the lease. The Clerk reported further that she had received a reply from Mr. Jones and he was stating although the lease period is 99 years, the Community Council has the right to break the lease annually on the 31st of March of each year by giving Gwynedd Council 12 months' notice (see clauses 1.36 and 3.26). So felt there was no need to adjust the period considering that the Community Council will only have to commit to a year in practice. Everyone agreed to sign this Lease apart from Cllr. Martin Hughes who abstained.

Gwynedd Council – Environmental Department

Received a letter from the above informing the Council that Ffordd Pen Llech will be closed on the 17th of this month so that works on behalf of Welsh Water can be carried out. The Clerk reported that she had already forwarded this letter to all Members.

Gwynedd Council – Economy Department

Received an email from Mr. Iwan Emlyn Davies of the above Department informing the Council that a vinyls scheme is available to improve the appearance of town centres and this involves vinyl being installed within the windows of empty properties on the high street. They are asking the Community Council to identify suitable properties within the town and submit the contact details, provide them with the owners contact details and give ideas of what kind of image the Community Council would like to see on the vinyl. It was agreed to reply stating that there was no empty property on the high street at the moment.

One Voice Wales

Received an e-mail from the above informing the Council that free training was been held and there was room for two Councillors to attend it. Also received a list of training dates for June, July, August and September. It was agreed to forward this e-mail to all Members.

Clerk's Wages

The Chairman stated that he had asked for this item to be put on the agenda because the Clerk was not getting a fair wage.

Before starting to discuss the above matter as on a vote everyone was in agreement that members of the public were leaving the meeting because this matter was to make the council staff.

The Chairman stated that he had a concern that Clerks were leaving their posts due to lack of pay and he had been discussing this matter with One Voice Wales. It was agreed that the Chairman make enquiries regarding national salary guidelines and that the matter be discussed when the finance sub-committee meets.

It was agreed that the Chairman send a copy of the Clerk's Employment Contract to all Members but stressed that this document was not to be shared with the public.

SIGNED.....Chairman

DATE..... 798.