

MINUTES OF HARLECH COMMUNITY COUNCIL MEETING HELD AT THE OLD LIBRARY, HARLECH AT 7.30 P.M. ON 01.07.24

APOLOGIES

Cllrs. Thomas Mort, Ceri Griffiths, Rhian Corps, Gordon Howie.

The Chairman welcomed Mr. Martin Hanks to the meeting as he has been appointed independent investigator and Mr. Hanks observed the meeting.

PRESENT

Cllrs. Christopher Braithwaite (Chairman), Tegid John (Vice Chairman), Edwina Evans, Martin Hughes, Giles Bentham, Reg Chapman, James Maxwell, Wendy Williams, and Cllr. Annwen Hughes and Gwynfor Owen (Gwynedd Council).

There were 6 members of the public present at the meeting

CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed Cllr. James Maxwell to his first meeting of the Council and Cllr. Maxwell signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

The Chairman reported that he had a meeting with Japanese Knotweed Wales with regards to receiving a complaint that there was evidence of this plant in Bron y Graig nature trail and he had received a report from the contractor and had forwarded this to all Members and everybody accepted the report in question including the quotation for treatment over 3 years of £1,750 and were also in agreement for Japanese Knotweed Wales to carry out a survey of the land at Penygraig.

MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on June 3rd 2024 were found to be correct.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were no matters arising from the minutes

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

No Member declared an interest on any matters.

GWYNEDD COUNCIL MATTERS

The following report was received from Cllr. Annwen Hughes and Cllr. Gwynfor Owen – Cllr. Annwen Hughes reported that she was recently made aware that vandalism had been done to the ladies public toilets by the Queen's hotel and that she had visited these toilets and taken pictures of the damage caused and had sent them to the relevant officer in Gwynedd Council who took the matter up straight away and sent a contractor down to sort the damage out. No damage has been done since to these toilets. She had contacted the Tidy Towns team who had informed her that they would be visiting the town shortly to carry out any tidying up that needs doing. She had received a reply from Gwynedd Council with regards to re-painting white and yellow lines in the high street stating that they would carry out an inspection and paint the parking spaces that needed attention and also re-paint the double yellow lines that had faded.

Cllr. Gwynfor Owen reported that following the CCTV footage of a car been driven at speed and crossing over land near Glan Gors that he has arranged a meeting between the police and Gwynedd Council officials, he also has received many complaints with regards to the train times and he also has had a meeting with Ken Skates regarding the cutting back of train services on the Cambrian Line. He has attended training for Councillors to do with corporate parenting and also attended a meeting of the schools budget forum.

MATTERS ARISING

Budget Plan

It was reported that the Council had spent £11,897.60 (which included bank charges) since the start of the new financial year and this was £38,021.15 less expenditure than what was earmarked in the budget for the year.

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 pictures of these benches were shown to the Members. Cllr. Williams stated that she would complete the inspection of the benches before the next meeting in September and she was asked to get prices for recycled plastic benches and prices to repair and paint the benches that needed attention.

Christmas Lights

The Chairman reported that that he had been informed by Mr. Geraint Williams that he was willing to accept £1,000 for about 20 lights as long as the Council paid for testing them and the Chairman stated that he had sent an email about this to all Members. The Chairman also stated that he had asked a local electrician to pat test the lights and Cllr. Martin Hughes agreed to meet with Mr. Geraint Williams to see how many lights were available. It was agreed to add "lighting up night" to the agenda heading.

Cyfeillion Ellis Wynne

The Chairman reported that three dates had been made available when to meet with the above together with Gwynedd Council and these were 11th, 13th and 17th September and also One Voice Wales was looking into appointing a Solicitor for the Council.

Finance Sub-Committee Meeting

The Chairman reported that a meeting of the above had taken place on the 27th of last month and that the sub-committee had gone through the budget and a copy of the minutes of this meeting had been forwarded to everybody. The Members went through the new budget which had been drawn up by the sub-committee and everybody agreed to accept this budget – new budget agreed and can be seen on the Council's website.

Play Park Sub-Committee Meeting

The Chairman reported that a meeting of the above had taken place on King George V playing fields on the 22nd of last month and a copy of the minutes of this meeting had been forwarded to everybody. It was agreed that Cllr. Reg Chapman would get a contractor to cut back the overgrowth that is growing onto beach road from the playing field as soon as possible.

Council's Annual Report

The Chairman stated that this matter had been placed on the agenda because the Members had not formally approved the report for it to be placed on the Council's website. Cllr. Giles Bentham was not satisfied with what had been written in the annual report and he had sent an amendment to be included in the annual report to all Members. There was disagreement with this because some Members stated that what was in the annual report was sufficient. A recorded vote was asked for and the Chairman, Vice Chairman, Cllrs. Edwina Evans and Wendy Williams voted not to include the amendment and Cllrs. Martin Hughes and Giles Bentham were in favour of including the amendment. Cllrs. Reg Chapman and James Maxwell abstained from voting.

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	- £61.99 – monthly payment administration of website and additional work
Customs & Excise	- £109.80 – tax on Clerk's wages
Mr. G. J. Williams	- £260.00 - cut grass King George playing field, play park and football field (x2).
Japanese Knotweed Removal	- £195.00 – inspection for japanese knotweed

Mr. M. J. Kerr - £580.00 - opening grave re the late Mr. Robert Sulwyn Lloyd Williams
Mr. Meirion Griffith - £168.00 - cut back overgrowth around the tennis court

Applications for financial contributions

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

The above payments were processed by Cllr. Edwina Evans 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.

Monies received since last meeting

Ms Paula Ireland - £30.00 – rent for allotment no. 7
Mrs Stephanie Evans - £40.00 - rent for allotments no. 5 & 10

Invoices paid since the last meeting

Catrin Soraya Williams – £165.00 - translation services

The Responsible Financial Officer reported that that the Internal Audit had been completed and that the Audit Opinion as set out in full below with recommendations only provided partial assurance in the “governance arrangements and the financial statement”

Failure to review the rates of staff expenses.

Lack of segregation of duties when creating and processing online payments.

The annual precept did not derive from an adequate budgeting process due to the failure to consider the expected income, together with the reserve balances.

Failure to review an individual's employment status. (This matter to be discussed at the end of the meeting)

Lack of transparency resulting from a failure to display all the information that the Council is required to publish electronically, together with a failure to clearly structure the website and distinguish it from information linked to another Council.

Failure to review the insurance policy to ensure it is adequate

The Responsible Financial Officer reported that she had completed the Annual Return up to 31st March 2024, the Members went through this return and agreed to approve it and it was also agreed that the Chairman and Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer sign this on behalf of the Council.

The Responsible Financial Officer reported further that because the Annual Return had not been certified and approved by the 30th June a notice had to be placed on the Council's website stating this and the reason why this had not been done. The Clerk reported that she had completed this notice because the Internal Auditor's report was not received until after the last Council meeting and therefore the Annual Return could not be approved until this meeting. Also the Clerk reported further that she had sent the 30th June notice asking for it to be uploaded onto the Council's website and she had also forwarded the Internal Auditor's report and the Annual Return to all Members.

CORRESPONDENCE

Mr. Joe Patton

Received an e-mail from the above asking if the Council would be willing to submit it's bank details to the CO-OP community funding so a grant application can be made by the Community Wildflower Garden. It was agreed to send Mr. Patton a copy of the Council's latest bank statements and also state that any monies paid to the Community Council with regards to the CO-OP grant will be ringfenced for the community meadow orchard project.

Ms Sue Collyer

Received an e-mail from the above voicing concern about trees close to her property that are located in Bron y Graig nature trail and asking if the Council if it would be possible to get 4 trees that are close to the boundary cut down. The Chairman stated that he had visited the site and it was agreed to ask Ms Collyer to seek advice and get a survey carried out of the trees in question.

Transport for Wales

Received an e-mail from Gail Jones on behalf of Transport for Wales regarding the latest update with regards to the Cambrian Line and stating that just over 500 responses was received regarding the recent consultation. Whilst they are still reviewing feedback from their stakeholders in relation to other parts of the network, they are in a position to update us on changes they have been able to make to the Cambrian Line timetable following this review process, details of which are as follows.

The proposal to run the extra trains to increase the frequency to Aberystwyth to a full 1 train per hour in the summer only (March-Sept) is to continue i.e. this will NOT be introduced in the winter. However, they will add a 16:30 train from Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth in all year around. This is because of higher passenger numbers on 17:30 train from Shrewsbury to Machynlleth. They will aim to introduce this extra service in May 2025, but it is subject to agreement with other operators and Network Rail. The wider 1 train per hour service will come in effect from March 2026.

It was proposed to remove the 08:52 service from Machynlleth to Pwllheli and return from Pwllheli at 11:37 during winter. There was a significant response to this proposal. After much consideration, they have opted to retain the 08:52 and 11:37 services all year around, however passenger numbers and revenue will be closely monitored over the next winter period and reviewed when planning the December 2025 timetable.

The last evening services in the summer (March to December) - will run at the same times as they currently run between Pwllheli and Machynlleth (approximately 20:26 Pwllheli southbound and 21:47 Machynlleth northbound). They will be doubling capacity on 4 key Cambrian Coast services from summer 2025 from 2 carriages to 4 carriages to support locals, tourists, and key local tourism businesses. This will mean there are 560 more seats on Cambrian Coast services during the summer in comparison to Summer 2022.

Also the Clerk reported that she had received a reply from Gethin Jones, Public Affairs Manager on behalf of Mr. James Price, Chief Executive thanking the Community Council for their e-mail with regards to the proposed changes that would take place on the Cambrian Line and stating that the information that was given to them was very valuable and gave them a much richer understanding of the the challenges and opportunities facing communities in Gwynedd that use Transport for Wales services regularly.

Gwynedd Council – Legal Department

Received a copy of the Lease regarding the public toilets near the memorial hall from the above Department and requesting the Chairman and Clerk to sign it. It was agreed that this would be done.

Employment

The Chairman stated that the Internal Auditor had stated that the employment status of a person carrying out work for the Community Council had to be reviewed.

Before starting to discuss the above matter and on a vote everyone was in agreement that members of the public were to leave the meeting because this matter was with regards to Council workforce .

The Chairman stated that he Internal Auditor had stated that the Council should decide if a person working for the Council was self employed or not and it was agreed to contact Mr. Paul Egan at One Voice Wales for further advice and clarification.

SIGNED.....Chairman

DATE.....

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