

ANNUAL REPORT
HARLECH
COMMUNITY COUNCIL
2024/2025

A WORD FROM THE CHAIRMAN – CLLR. CHRISTOPHER BRAITHWAITE

It is a pleasure to present Harlech Community Council's third Annual Report, which outlines the work undertaken during 2024/25 and highlights how we continue to engage with the community to improve the economic, social, environmental, and cultural well-being of our town. Our collective goal remains clear: to make Harlech an even better place to live and visit. Our vision is to *“ensure that Harlech continues to be a pleasant and welcoming place for people of all ages to live — where they feel safe, have opportunities to be physically and mentally healthy, and can socialise and work in a quality environment. It will also be a place that welcomes visitors and lives with them easily.”* This report offers a snapshot of the Council's work over the past year and illustrates how we are striving to support residents of all ages, local businesses, community groups, and visitors alike. We fully acknowledge that these continue to be challenging times, but we remain committed to working in partnership with our community to realise our shared vision for Harlech. Despite the obstacles, the Council has successfully delivered a number of exciting and valuable projects. It has been a privilege to Chair the Council during this time of both reflection and progress. As part of our commitment to transparency and improvement, the Council commissioned an independent investigation into the financial failings of 2022, following the publication of a report by Audit Wales in November 2023 concerning the 2022/23 financial year. I am pleased to report that, as a direct result of these audits, the Council has adopted all recommendations and agreed a clear action plan for moving forward. I look forward to leading the Council in raising standards and ensuring full compliance, while delivering a balanced precept budget that serves the best interests of Harlech. The year ahead, 2025/26, promises to be a time of positive change and real improvement — one we approach with energy, responsibility, and optimism.

Membership

Cllr. Christopher Braithwaite (Chairman)

Cllr. James Maxwell (Vice Chairman) – elected July 2024

Cllr. Reg Chapman – elected April 2024

Cllr. Edwina Evans

Cllr. Giles Bentham – resigned February 2025

Cllr. Rhian Corps

Cllr. Ceri Griffiths

Cllr. Gordon Howie

Cllr. Martin Hughes

Cllr. Tegid John – resigned September 2024

Cllr. Thomas Mort – resigned September 2024

Cllr. Wendy Williams

Cllr. Simon Turner – elected November 2024

Cllr. Mark Lewis – elected November 2024

Two Councillors represent the area on Gwynedd Council namely Cllr. Annwen Hughes and Cllr. Gwynfor Owen.

Sadly two Councillors resigned from the Community Council in September namely Cllrs. Tegid John and Thomas Mort and in November Cllrs. Simon Turner and Mark Lewis were elected onto the Council. Cllr. Giles Bentham resigned from the Council in February

Staff

The Council has one member of staff, Annwen Hughes, who is the Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer. She works part-time. The Clerk may be contacted by e-mail

Enquiriescyngorharlech@outlook.com, letter to Crafnant, Llanbedr, Gwynedd LL45 2PH or phone 01341241613/07919582741.

Meetings

Normal meetings of the Council are held monthly except for August at the Old Library in the town on the first Monday of every month apart from May when the meeting is held on the second Monday because of the bank holiday.

Website

As problems have arisen with the Community Council www.cyngorharlech.co.uk website the Council are in the process of building a new website that will include Information about the Community Council including the agendas and minutes of meetings, policies and news. The hope is that the new website will be alive very soon.

EXTERNAL MEMBERSHIP

The Community Council is a member of One Voice Wales, which is the main representative body for Community and Town councils in Wales. The Community Council elects Members to other external bodies, namely, Old Library Committee, Memorial Hall Committee and the Governing Body of Ysgol Tan y Castell.

ACCOUNTABILITY

The Community Council has adopted a Member's Code of Conduct and a register of interests is kept for each member. Each Councillor has to declare any interest they have in items to be discussed at the start of each meeting and these are noted in the minutes. The Community Council is audited by internal and external auditors annually. The internal audit is undertaken by the Audit Department of Gwynedd Council and the External Audit by the Wales Audit Office.

FINANCE AND EXPENDITURE

The Community Council sets a budget annually and monitors expenditure against budget throughout the financial year by receiving a regular report from the Clerk. The main source of income for the Community Council is the precept which is set annually and presented to Gwynedd Council in January for the following financial year. The precept is collected on behalf of the Community Council by Gwynedd Council and is the only source of tax revenue available to Town and Community Councils. The process of deciding on the level of precept includes the preparation of a draft budget on the basis of

the financial situation of the Community Council by considering the likely costs, plans for projects, setting an amount for contributions - within the guidelines published annually - and any other financial matters. Consideration is also given to the reserves held by the Community

Council to ensure an appropriate precept is set. The level of precept was kept at £70,000 for 2024/25. In addition, the Community Council received £6,921.79 from the 10% Parking Scheme by Gwynedd Council which it joined a few years ago.

Income & Expenditure 2024/25

	Income	Expenditure
	£	£
Bank Interest	1,740.26	
Precept	70,000.00	
Cemetery Income	11,606.00	
Allotments Rent	360.00	
Allotment Grant	2,500.00	
Hire of King George playing field	150.00	
Reimbursement Car Parks Income	6,921.79	
Reimbursement Footpaths Cutting	990.35	
V.A.T Reimbursement	1,177.81	
Wildflower Garden Grant	1,600.00	
Footpaths		2,212.00
Grass cut playing field		1,792.50
Grass cut cemetery		2,150.00
Cemetery Expenditure		3,270.00
Eradicate wasps nest in cemetery		50.00
Fall trees by Nature Trail		400.00
Eradicate japanese knotweed		350.00
Christmas Lights		2,143.07

Christmas Trees	384.00
3 new benches	1,296.61
Toilets materials (castle toilets)	257.98
Toilets caretaker (castle toilets)	1,633.73
Toilets rent (99 years)	99.00
Welsh Water (toilets)	947.70
Toilets Partnership	10,000.00
Welsh Water (allotments)	45.67
Allotments improvements	3,330.00
Memorial Hall Committee	2,000.00
Old Library Committee	2,000.00
Cylch Meithrin Harlech	2,000.00
Cyfeillion Ysgol Tanycastell	3,000.00
Ysgol Tan y Castell	500.00
Eisteddfod Arduwy	500.00
contribution to HAL	21,897.00
Clerk's Wages	1,764.00
Clerk's Costs	756.20
Office Expenditure	750.00
Tax on Clerk's Wages	439.80
P.A.Y.E on line	228.00
Hire of Meeting Room	216.00
Tennis Court Rates	57.32
Upkeep of tennis court	168.00
Election Costs	210.00
Create new website	480.00
Website Hosting	272.93
Translator	910.00
Penygraig Legal Costs	3,200.00
Training courses	453.00
Martin Hanks Report	940.00
Wildflower Community Garden	759.26
Play park notice boards	2,098.80
Council's Insurance	2,082.04
play parks inspection	336.00

Emptying Bins Playing Fields	821.02
2023/24 Internal Audit	336.00
One Voice Wales Membership	350.00
Various	20.00
Bank Charges	104.00
	£96,847.21 £80,011.63

BUDGET

The Council's precept is £70,000 and is earmarked as follows:-

Donates £10,000 to Gwynedd Council to keep the public toilets open (the one in Bron y Graig Isaf car park and the one near the Queens hotel are open all year round and the one in Min y Don car park is open for 6 months of the year)

Also donated £21,897.00 in this financial year to Harlech and Ardudwy Leisure (HAL) to keep the swimming pool open.

Since June the Council also pays a translator to attend Council meetings every month, and has spent £910 during this financial year.

To date the Council has spent £257.98 on maintaining the public toilets near the Memorial Hall, pay £99 as rent to Gwynedd Council for 99 years and also the Council has paid the caretaker £1,633.73 for cleaning these toilets on a daily basis. The Council is closing these toilets over the winter season so they can carry out more maintenance work on them.

The Council spends a substantial sum to cut the grass in the public cemetery, Llyn y Felin play park and King George V play park regularly every two weeks between April and October. Also the grass on various public footpaths in the area are cut at least twice a year. The cost of all this work in this financial year was £6,154.50. The Council

also spent £3,270 as expenditure for opening graves in the public cemetery and £50 for eradicating a wasps nest.

The Council donates to various organizations in the area annually at their monthly meetings in October and March and have contributed £3,000 To Friends of Tan y Castell School, £2,000 to the local Cylch Meithrin, £500 to Eisteddfod Arduwy and £500 to Ysgol Tan y castell towards the cost of the train to take pupils to have swimming lessons in Porthmadog. £2,000 each annually is contributed to the running of the Memorial Hall and the Old Library due to the Community Council been Trustees of both these organizations. These contributions are included in the Council's precept.

This year the Council have contributed £2,143.07 towards the christmas lights in the town and purchased two Christmas trees at a cost of £384 to the Council.

Because the Council Members agreed to have an independent investigation carried out into the scam that took place in December 2022, Martin Hanks was asked to carry out this work and he came to the Council meeting in July and presented his report to Council Members at the November meeting. This report will be uploaded onto the Council's new website when it is live. The Council have adopted the recommendations in this report and the Audit Wales report in full and a timetable has been created in which the Clerk and Council Members will achieve the necessary training to fulfill their roles in a modern environment. It will take approximately two years to complete this in full.

Council work and responsibilities

Property management

2 play parks namely King George V and LLyn y Felin

The Public Cemetery

The Public Footpaths

Bron y Graig Nature Trail

Bus shelters in the area

Plinth at Pen y Graig

The Old Slaughter House

Public Seats

Allotments

Piece of land in front of the Church

Noticeboards

Administration

Gwynedd Council appointed as Internal Auditors 2023/24

Allowances – review no change, no payments

Council website

Keep a risk assessment.

Keeping a record of interest