

MINUTES OF FINANCE COMMITTEE HARLECH COMMUNITY COUNCIL MEETING HELD AT THE OLD LIBRARY, HARLECH AT 7.30 P.M. ON 08.01.24

APOLOGIES

Cllrs. Thomas Mort, Huw Jones, Emma Howie and Gwynfor Owen (Gwynedd Council).

PRESENT

Cllrs. Edwina Evans (Chairman), Christopher Braithwaite (Vice Chairman), Ceri Griffiths, Gordon Howie, Tegid John, Rhian Corps, Martin Hughes, Giles Bentham, Wendy Williams, and Cllr. Annwen Hughes (Gwynedd Council).

7 members of the public were present to ask questions and to get answers about the fraud that occurred to the Council in December 2022. A copy of the questions asked together with answers is attached to these minutes.

The Chairman welcomed Cllr. Giles Bentham to his first meeting of the Council and wished him well in the future. Cllr. Bentham signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office at the start of the meeting.

Report received from the External Auditor

The Chairman reported that the above report needed to be discussed which was received from the External Auditor regarding a scam that occurred to the Council in December 2022. A report had been received from the External Auditor stating that due to what had happened the Council needed to be more careful when making online payments and it was reported that steps to make this safer had already been taken. 'The Council agreed with what had been set out in the next stages of the report which is whether the report requires it to take any action – and Members agreed to seek the opinion of an independent adviser to investigate on behalf of the Council and advise on appropriate action, including interviewing the people concerned'.

- whether the recommendations in the report are to be accepted – and Members agreed to accept the recommendations in the report
- what steps (if any) to take in response to the report and recommendation - Members discussed what steps to take and comments were made regarding the recommendations from point R1 to R5 and also it was agreed to state that point R4 and R5 have not yet been completed but are work in progress.

MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on December 4th 2023 were found to be correct.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Cllr. Martin Hughes asked if it was for this year only that the Council had paid Mr. Owen Brown to administer the website.

MATTERS ARISING

Independant Renumeration Panel

The Clerk reported that a form had to be signed by every Councillor again this year with regard to the above. There is a need to list every rule that is been adopted in the Council minutes and if a payment

1.....Chairman

rule regarding costs is been adopted the Councillors that DO NOT claim expenses sign the form declaring

this. After a discussion it was agreed to adopt the payments rule regarding costs again this year and it was agreed that everybody that wanted to claim costs would do so but it was important that everybody return the form back to the Clerk once it was completed.

Budget Plan

Copies showing the differences between the expenditure that had been made up to the 31st December 2023 since the beginning of April 2023 and what had been earmarked on the budget plan up to the end of December was given to every member. It was reported that the Council had spent £76,093.20 (which included bank charges) since the start of the new financial year and this was £3,301.94 more expenditure than what was earmarked in the budget for the year. The members went through the different expenditures that had been made and the differences that were on the business plan individually. It was agreed to accept the above.

Council's Financial Risk Assessment Policy

Copies of the above was given to each member that was present and every item on it was discussed individually. It was decided to accept this policy. It was agreed to add the tennis court to this policy.

Council Projects 2024/25

The Clerk reported that she had put the above on the agenda in order to get some idea of projects that would need attention during the new financial year so as to include an estimated cost in the budget and it was agreed to list the following - play park maintenance and installation of new fence and mats £45,000, new play equipment £15,000, benches £2,000, bus shelters £7,000, Christmas lights £6,000, tennis court £2,500, allotments £3,000, nature trail £2,500, Council website £1,500, Friends of Tanycastell School £3,000, Cylch Meithrin Harlech £2,000, Penygraig land purchase and legal costs £3,500, wildflower community garden £500..

HAL

Cllr. Martin Hughes reported that he attended the meeting between the area's Community Councils at Llanbedr village hall on the 18th of this month and the Vice-Chairman apologised that he was not able to attend this meeting. 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. The Clerk had sent copies of HAL's accounts up to the end of November to all Members and also reported that another meeting was being held between the area's Community Councils at Llanbedr village hall on the 14th of February and also there will be a meeting between the Community Councils and HAL on the 18th of this month. After discussion it was agreed to continue to pay a contribution to HAL in the 2024/25 financial year.

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Council's Budget for 2024/25

The Treasurer gave each member a copy of the Council's accounts up to the year ending 31st December 2023 so that they could see what the financial situation was like. A discussion took place and it was decided that an estimate of the following costs were going to be with the Council during the next financial year - Council's insurance £2,000, Clerk's wages £2,200, Clerk's expenses £1,800 , office expenses £500, tax on Clerk's wages £440, Clerk's Accountant £216, donations £5,000, Harlech & Ardudwy Leisure £21,896.95 , Memorial Hall committee £2,000, Old Library committee £2,000, Friends of Tanycastell School £3,000, Cylch Meithrin Harlech £2,000, cemetery costs £3,500, grass cutting of the cemetery £2,000, grass cutting of the footpaths £2,500, grass cutting King George playing field £2,000, Bron y Graig Nature Trail £2,500, Welsh Water £900, salt bins £400, christmas lights £6,000, benches £2,000, emptying litter bins in playing fields £1,000, run and upkeep of toilets by Memorial Hall £8,000, contribution to keep public toilets open £10,000, One Voice Wales £350, rent meeting room £200, up keep of both play parks £45,000, new play equipment £15,000, bus shelters £7,000, tennis court £2,500, inspection of play parks £324, Council's website £1,500, tennis court rates £120, auditors £3,000, wildflower community garden £500, Penygraig land £3,500, sundries £1,000, upkeep of various items £500, bank charges £150.

Council's Precept for 2024/25

A letter was received from Gwynedd Council with regard to the above. After discussing the budget and foreseeing what the Council's expenditure will be for the forthcoming financial year, it was decided to keep the precept at £70,000.

NOTICE OF MOTION

The Clerk reported that she had received a Notice of Motion from Cllr. Martin Hughes in accordance with Standing Order 9 asking that Harlech Community Council recognises the value

of Harlech swimming pool for the health, safety and wellbeing of the people of Harlech and Ardudwy including future generations. It therefore commits to:

- a) Working with the board of Harlech and Ardudwy Leisure to secure the long term future of the swimming pool;
- b) Grant funding HAL at the current level for another 12 months until 31st March 2025;
- c) Calling upon the other Community Councils of Ardudwy to maintain their funding at the current level for another 12 months until 31st March 2025.

It also proposes the development of a Service Level Agreement between HAL and the Community Councils, to clarify the relationship between them and the future levels of service.' Cllr. Martin Hughes stated that he was withdrawing the above motion as the Council had already agreed to help HAL.

TREASURER'S REPORT

The Treasurer reported that there was £5,664.47 in the bank, £91,913.05 in the reserve account.

Invoices needing payment since last meeting

Revenue & Customs - £110.00 - tax on Clerk's wages

Audit Wales - £200.00 – external audit 2020/21

3.....Chairman

Tindle Newspapers - £359.00 - notice external audit report

One Voice Wales - £38.00 - Councillor's training 6.12.23

Old Library Committee - £177.00 – hire of meeting room

Monies received since last meeting

Customs & Excise - £139.00 – V.A.T. reimbursement

Customs & Excise - £1,851.60 – V.A.T. reimbursement

Applications for financial contributions

Harlech & Ardudwy Leisure - £1,750.00 – precept proposal (monthly payment).

The above payments were processed by Cllr. Gordon Howie and Cllr. Ceri Griffiths 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.

MATTERS DISCUSSED AFTER THE FINANCE MEETING

PLANNING APPLICATION

Erection of single dwelling and detached garage with annexe space together with associated drainage, access and landscaping - Land to the north of Pencerrig Estate, Ffordd Uchaf, Harlech (NP5/61/52E)

Support this application.

Erection of two storey side extension, single storey rear extension, and detached garage/garden store - 23 Ystad Castell Morfa, Harlech (NP5/61/660)

Support this application.

CORRESPONDANCE

Welsh Government

Received a letter from the above informing the Council that the appropriate sum under Section 137(4)(a) of Local Government Act 1972, Section 137 Expenditure Limit for 2024/25 will be £10.81 per elector. The Clerk reported that the latest number of electors she has is 1,140 and therefore the Council have the right to contribute up to £12,323.40 to outside bodies.

Gwynedd Council – Highways Department

Received a letter from the above Department informing the Council that the Our Area Tidying Up Team will be visiting this area between the 15th and 19th of this month.

Gwynedd Council – Environment Department

Received a letter from the above informing the Council that Twtil road will be closed on the 16th of this month so that works can be carried out to renew a defective pole and cabling activities on behalf of BT Openreach.

SIGNED.....Chairman

DATE.....