

12 November, 2013.

LLANELLI RURAL COUNCIL

Minute Nos: 283 – 292

At a **COUNCIL** Meeting of the Llanelli Rural Council held at the Council Chamber, Vauxhall Buildings, Vauxhall, Llanelli, on Tuesday, 12 November, 2013, at 6.00 p.m.

Present: Cllr. T. J. Jones (Chairman)

Cllrs.

F. Akhtar	G. N. R. Edwards
L. A. Beer	H. J. Evans
T. Bowen	R. E. Evans
S. M. Caiach	S. N. Lewis
D. M. Cundy	A. G. Morgan
M. V. Davies	A. J. Rogers
S. L. Davies	W. V. Thomas
G. H. Wooldridge	

283. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. T. Devichand, S. M. Donoghue, M. L. Evans and C. A. Rees.

284. MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

285. MID AND WEST WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Further to Minute No. 236, the Chairman welcomed Group Manager Roger Thomas, Head of Carmarthenshire County Command and Assistant Chief Fire Officer Derek Masson, Director of Service Delivery, Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service to the meeting and invited them to provide Members with an update on the crewing arrangement at Llanelli Fire Station and to briefly discuss the Draft Annual Improvement Plan 2014/15 (Minute No. 255 also refers).

Mr Masson thanked Members for the opportunity of returning to the Council. He was delighted to report that the new crewing arrangement at Llanelli Fire Station was working well.

Mr Masson stated that the past few months had been a challenging time, there had been a lot of public concern regarding the new crewing arrangement for Llanelli Fire Station but he was pleased to re-affirm there had been no reduction in service to Llanelli; emergency response

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had not changed. The Group Manager, Mr Roger Thomas had been working closely with the new crewing staff on how they delivered the service. As far as Llanelli residents were concerned, the service was exactly the same as before with five crew members being maintained on duty at any given time.

The introduction of the Self Rostered Crew at Llanelli Fire Station, had delivered substantial cost savings. As a direct consequence, the Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service had been able to fund three additional posts for a community team based at the fire station. The community team would be working together with the Police to promote awareness to reduce fires, this in turn enabled the service to become more proactive with the focus on fire prevention measures. This service enhancement wouldn't have been possible without the cost savings. Llanelli Fire Station was currently being upgraded. Mr Masson then referred to the current redevelopment of the fire station and the work being done to construct additional training facilities including additional training rooms for the staff and on-call staff. There was also a dedicated community facility for use as a free public resource. This would provide a meeting place for the fire brigade to engage with the wider community. A number of groups intended to use this multi purpose room and it provided an ideal opportunity for the Fire Service to engage with other public service providers and groups such as Communities First as well as other community stakeholders. Mr Masson concluded by stating he was delighted with the efficiencies achieved and with the fire station's performance and was happy to answer Members' questions.

The Chairman thanked Mr Masson for addressing Members and then invited questions from the floor.

In response to a question about fire stations being downgraded or closed in the Gorseinon and Swansea areas because of financial cuts and the potential impact this would have on Llanelli, wherein Members sought an assurance the service in Llanelli would not diminish as a result; Mr Masson responded by stating the Fire Authority had conducted a comprehensive risk assessment and he was therefore happy to confirm Llanelli had the service it needed. However, looking at the wider picture, the Fire Authority had some difficult decisions to make.

Mr Masson went on to state that workshops had been arranged to look at budget reductions. The Fire Authority had a significant financial challenge where it needed to identify £5 million of savings over the next three years from an annual budget of £43 million. The Fire Service would attempt to demonstrate through the workshops what this significant cost saving would look like in terms of its overall impact on service delivery. If the Fire Authority wanted to progress spending cuts then any cost saving options needed to be risk assessed in the first instance. Furthermore, any planned changes would then need to be consulted upon. Mr Masson commented that the Fire and Rescue Service had a number of strategic fire stations providing fire cover. If it was necessary to close a fire station, a comprehensive risk assessment would be undertaken to demonstrate resilience prior to the Fire Authority making a decision. Mr Masson could not give an absolute assurance that fire stations in Gorseinon and Swansea would not be downgraded but he reiterated before anything happened a comprehensive risk assessment would be carried out and decisions would be made at the time based on the outcome of that assessment and not beforehand. Given there had been no decision taken at this stage he didn't know what impact this might have on Llanelli going forward so he was not prepared to give any commitment at this particular time.

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Members were naturally concerned if financial cuts took place and the fire stations were to close this would have a detrimental impact on the level of emergency cover in Llanelli. For instance would Llanelli Fire Station appliances then have to cover these other areas? In reply, Mr Roger Thomas informed Members that Llanelli Fire Station would often cover other areas and Tumble and Ammanford Fire Stations would then cover Llanelli Fire Station if needed. Mr Masson in support of this stated Llanelli would not be exposed if an incident occurred. Other fire appliances would be brought in; the Fire Authority had been doing this for quite sometime. In response to questions about the Working time Directive (WTD) and also the potential lack of fire cover in other areas and services being stretched; Mr Masson confirmed there were no outstanding issues with the WTD at Llanelli Fire Station. Furthermore, on the point of cover, the Fire and Rescue Service had 73 appliances and these could be mobilised anywhere to provide cover as standard protocol dictated. There would be no change to the cover arrangements in Llanelli; they would remain exactly the same. If there was a knock on effect elsewhere this won't affect Llanelli cover. In support of this, Mr Thomas confirmed the Fire Service had closing-in moves so for example, Tumble Fire Station crew would close in and sit on standby at Llanelli Fire Station this was standard procedure where crews cover other areas.

Both Mr Masson and Mr Thomas then responded to additional points about funding cuts made at Llanelli Fire Station; further questions about the planned new community facilities being built at the fire station and also to an invitation to attend a future Council meeting. Mr Masson also responded to a point of concern that Llanelli might be exposed if changes were made to neighbouring fire stations; Members referred to a newspaper article published today about Pontiets Fire Station closing and felt the Fire Service might be spreading itself too thin. Mr Masson confirmed Llanelli residents would not be exposed to any undue risk because of the structured strategy applied if Llanelli appliances were called elsewhere; other appliances would be brought in with adjustments being co-ordinated to mitigate the impact. However, if financial cuts resulted in service reductions, he could not give a cast iron guarantee about the future cover arrangements but confirmed the Fire Authority classified Llanelli as a priority town.

The Clerk referred to the Fire Authority's draft annual improvement plan for 2014-15 and the three key improvement objectives. He informed Mr Masson that the Council intentionally had not responded to the Fire Authority's consultation exercise despite previously discussing the draft improvement plan at its Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 16 October, 2013, (to which Minute No. 255 refers). The Clerk then proceeded to read an extract of the said Minute in the form of a question and asked Mr Masson to clarify whether one of the planned actions identified under 'managing reduced budgets to support safer communities' might have an impact on Llanelli Fire Station. The Fire Authority intended to implement outcomes associated with the strategic review of service delivery management arrangements for Swansea and Neath Port Talbot. Mr Masson confirmed this might have an impact on Llanelli Fire Station as service support from these areas to Llanelli during emergencies might diminish.

In closing Mr Masson stated he would be pleased to attend a future Council meeting to discuss on going service arrangements. He suggested it would be prudent to return after the Fire Authority had set its budget. The position on areas of further expenditure cuts would be known and he could then provide a more accurate assessment of the impact this might have on Llanelli and the service generally.

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Thereupon, both the Leader and the Chairman thanked Mr Masson and Mr Thomas for attending and they withdrew from the meeting.

RESOLVED that the information provided by the Fire Service representatives be noted and that Mr Masson, ACFO, Director of Service Delivery, Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service be invited to attend a further Council meeting once the Fire Authority had set its budget for 2014/15.

286. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RESOLVED that the following Minutes (copies of which had been previously circulated to Members) be confirmed and signed as a true record of proceedings:

Council	8 October, 2013
Recreation and Welfare Committee	15 October, 2013
Policy and Resources Committee	16 October, 2013
Planning and Liaison Committee	28 October, 2013
Finance and General Purposes Committee	30 October, 2013
Community Development Grants Panel	31 October, 2013
Learning and Development Consultative Committee	31 October, 2013

287. MATTERS ARISING

**(1) PARKS, PLAY AREAS AND OTHER
COMMUNITY ASSETS**

Pursuant to Minute No. 238, the Clerk provided Members with an update on how the park and play area transfers from Carmarthenshire County Council was progressing. He reported that both he and Cllr. W. V. Thomas attended a meeting today with Officers from Carmarthenshire County Council where funding opportunities were identified to bring the assets up to an acceptable standard prior to the transfers taking place.

The evidence gathering and the funding bids would be prepared by Carmarthenshire County Council and work was about to start. It was hoped the financial commitment from both the Rural Council and the County Council would be kept to a minimum but sufficient to draw down the necessary funding. The legal paperwork was being prepared but there might be a slight delay with the transfer of Cilsaig play area because the County Council had yet to complete its registration and ownership of the land with the Land Registry. It was likely, therefore that this transfer might need to be pursued separately to the other asset transfers. Members were informed steady progress was being made and Cllr. Thomas confirmed the meeting was positive and productive and it was

RESOLVED that the information be noted and to await further developments.

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**(2) CARMARTHENSHIRE YOUTH AND
CHILDREN'S ASSOCIATION (CYCA)**

Further to Minute No. 241, the Clerk reported arrangements had been made for CYCA representatives to attend the Recreation and Welfare Committee meeting, scheduled for 19 November, 2013.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

288. YOUR HEALTH YOUR FUTURE – PRINCE PHILIP HOSPITAL

(1) PROGRESS REPORT

Further to Minute No. 239, the Clerk provided Members with a brief progress report on events and matters since the last meeting.

Members were informed that a Special Council meeting had been arranged for Thursday, 21 November, 2013, whereby the five Assembly Members representing Llanelli were attending to discuss the Health Minister's decision to downgrade Prince Philip Hospital (PPH) to a nurse led emergency service supported by GP's.

The Clerk then referred to Judicial Review proceedings being brought against the Hywel Dda Health Board and this now being widened to bring in the Health Minister, Welsh Government. The Claimant's legal team attended a recent Court hearing in Cardiff seeking direction from the Judge on how to proceed. At this hearing the Health Board's legal team argued that given the Health Minister's decision the case being brought against it was somewhat academic and sought leave for the case to be dropped. The Judge was not persuaded to do this at least for the time being. The situation would become more clearer if and when a case against the Minister was established. The Court would look at it again upon hearing the application for Judicial Review proceedings against the Minister.

During discussion, Members expressed their disappointment that Hywel Dda Health Board had decided to suspend all elective orthopaedic surgery for the next six months. It placed doubt over plans to make PPH a centre of excellence for orthopaedic surgery and whether there was a genuine desire to deliver on this promise. In the short term it raised concern over the effective use of resources with beds and staff resources not being fully utilised with patient waiting lists being compounded. In the longer term the concern was ultimately that no operations would be performed at the hospital leading to the further downgrading of hospital services. The local perception was the Health Board was being led by its escalating debt burden and not by its promise to deliver better patient outcomes, and it was

RESOLVED that the progress report be noted and an invitation be sent to Hywel Dda Health Board representatives to attend a future Council meeting to discuss its position on orthopaedic surgery.

FURTHER RESOLVED that Nia Griffith MP be informed of the Special Council Meeting scheduled for Thursday, 21 November, 2013.

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During discussion of the above, Cllrs. F. Akhtar, S. L. Davies and S. N. Lewis left the meeting.

289. CARMARTHENSHIRE COMMUNITIES FIRST CLUSTER

Further to Minute No. 240, Members received a letter from Mr Paul Harries, Community Development Officer, Llanelli Town Council. The Clerk informed Members that he had held a meeting with Mr Harries to discuss whether it was feasible for the Llanelli Community Partnership to widen its geographic remit so as to include the Hengoed and Llwynhendy Wards to facilitate better community liaison in support of the newly established Carmarthenshire Communities First Cluster.

Mr Harries in his letter stated that he would place the suggestion to the Partnership at its next meeting for discussion and would then report back to the Council.

The Clerk informed Members that Mr Harries would be attending the Council meeting scheduled for 10 December, 2013, to give an update. Carmarthenshire County Council officers will also be in attendance.

RESOLVED that the information be noted and to await further developments.

290. ECUMENICAL SERVICE OF COMMEMORATION

A letter was received from Mr R. J. Goodridge, MBE, JP, Centenary Commemoration Organiser, inviting Members to a unique service that was to be held at Carmarthen Park on Sunday, 3 August, 2014, to commemorate the centenary of the outbreak of World War One.

RESOLVED that the Chairman attends the event.

291. LLANELLI JOINT BURIAL AUTHORITY

Members received the following Minutes of a meeting of the Llanelli Joint Burial Authority held on 11 September, 2013:

“At the Meeting of the Llanelli Joint Burial Authority held at Vauxhall Buildings, Vauxhall, Llanelli, on Wednesday, 11 September, 2013 at 4:00 pm.

Present: P. J. Edmunds (Chairman)

Cllrs.

T. Bowen

L. J. Butler

M. J. P. Burns

M. V. Davies

V.J. Johns

C. J. Reed MBE

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21. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs F. Akhtar and T.J. Jones.

22. MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

23. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RESOLVED that the following minutes (copies of which had been previously circulated) be confirmed and signed as a true record of proceedings.

Ordinary Meeting - 10 July 2013

24. INCOME AND EXPENDITURE REPORTS

RESOLVED that the income and expenditure reports for June and July 2013 and the provisional report for August 2013 be noted.

25. SCHEDULES OF PAYMENTS

Consideration was given to the schedules of payments for July and August 2013, which revealed expenditure for the months amounted to £39,604.35 and £16,444.80 respectively.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

26. LOCAL GOVERNMENT PAY SCALES 2013/2014

RESOLVED that the National Joint Council circular 2013/2014 confirming pay scales and allowances effective from 1 April 2013, be received and adopted.

27. ANNUAL RETURN FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2013
EXTERNAL AUDITOR'S OPINION

Members considered the report letter received from Mazars LLP, stating its opinion on the Authority's Annual Return for the year ending 31 March 2013. No qualifying issues were identified.

RESOLVED that the Annual Return be approved and the Auditor's opinion be noted; furthermore that Section 3 of the Annual Return (Certification and Approval) be duly signed and the document returned to Mazars LLP so that the remainder of Section 3 (External Audit Certificate) may be completed in order to conclude the audit.

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28. CLLR. T. J. JONES

Members conveyed their best wishes to Cllr. T. J. Jones following his recent indisposition.

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The meeting concluded at 4:15 pm

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RESOLVED that the Minutes be accepted.

292. LETTERS OF APPRECIATION

RESOLVED that the letters of appreciation for the Council’s assistance received from the following, be noted with pleasure:

- (1) Llanelli Ramblers Festival of Walks;
- (2) Shelter Cymru.

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The Meeting concluded at 6.55 p.m.

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The afore-mentioned Minutes were declared to be a true record of the proceedings and signed by the Chairman presiding thereat and were, on 10 December, 2013, adopted by the Council.