

22 April, 2009.

LLANELLI RURAL COUNCIL

Minute Nos: 562 - 570

At a Meeting of the **POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE** of the Llanelli Rural Council held at the Conference Room, Vauxhall Buildings, Vauxhall, Llanelli, on Wednesday, 22 April, 2009, at 4.45 p.m.

Present: Cllr. G. H. Wooldridge (Chairman)

Cllrs.

T. D. Bowen	S. M. Donoghue
D. J. Davies	H. J. Evans
M. V. Davies	T. Rh. Ifan
S. L. Davies	C. A. Rees

Together with Cllr. M. J. Lewis.

562. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. S. M. Caiach, M. L. Davies, T. Devichand (Cllr. S. L. Davies deputising), T. J. Jones and V. R. Thomas (Cllr. S. M. Donoghue deputising).

563. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT

The Chairman referred to the recent demise of Sir David C. Mansel Lewis, KCVO, BA, JP. Members and Officers thereupon stood in silent tribute.

564. MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

565. SERVICE PLANS 2009/10

Members considered the Council's Service Plans for 2009/10 which set key objectives for the following service groups:-

- Administrative Services;
- Community Services;
- Recreation and Leisure Services; and
- Training Services.

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Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED that the Service Plans for 2009/10 be accepted.

566. COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS' AND SPORTING CLUBS' ASSOCIATION WITH THE COUNCIL

Further to Minute No. 469, Members discussed formulating a policy for the letting of the Council's facilities and possible penalties for their misuse.

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED that a working group, comprising two Members of each political group be agreed in principle and that it be tasked with drawing up a policy framework for committee consideration and, furthermore, appointments to the working group shall be confirmed at the next meeting.

567. COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ATTENDING CONFERENCES

Pursuant to Minute No. 470, reference was made to the need for a policy whereby Members attending conferences fed back information verbally to others. It was felt that the current practice of leaving documents obtained from training sessions in the office was not beneficial.

Cllr. S. M. Donoghue having offered information on the policy utilised at his place of work on feedback expected from attendances at conferences etc., it was

RESOLVED that Cllr. Donoghue's offer be accepted and that the matter be discussed at a future meeting.

568. PROPOSALS ON THE FUTURE OF COMMUNITY HEALTH COUNCILS IN WALES

A letter was received from the Chief Officer, Carmarthenshire Community Health Council, together with a consultation paper received from the Welsh Assembly Government.

The Chief Officer apologised for the delay in notifying this Council of the Welsh Assembly Government's Consultation Event held in Carmarthen on 7 April, 2009. Although various ways of circulating the information had been used, not all parts of the county had been notified.

The Clerk referred to the fact that this Council supported the views and observations of the Committee for the Improvement of Hospital Services regarding this particular consultation exercise and was thus able to give an informed overview to Members.

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It was believed that the functions of Community Health Councils (CHCs) should be strengthened but would go further by suggesting that CHCs be granted additional powers to issue non-conformance notices to the new Local Health Boards (LHBs) when service standards were deemed unacceptable or when views had been ignored or not properly considered. This would strengthen CHCs' scrutiny role and increase levels of accountability between the two bodies. It was important for the public to have confidence in the reform measures so that CHCs were not viewed as talking shops and being ineffectual in bringing about changes in patient health care and standards.

Streamlining from nineteen to seven CHCs in the Council's view would dilute local accountability and the importance attached to local issues. Given the large size of the proposed catchment areas, it was felt that perhaps CHCs ought to be re-designated as Regional Health Councils instead. The term community implied having something in common. The Council failed to see what the town of Llanelli would have in common with rural villages and settlements in Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire under the new arrangement planned for West Wales. The Council had concerns over the role of the proposed 23 Area Associations and how their work and findings would influence and make a real impact on regional CHC agendas. The Council believed that effective local representation would be lost under the proposed arrangement.

The Council would advocate keeping CHCs local to safeguard the interests of fair local representation and the accountability that went with it.

In reply to the question of the issues to be overcome so that the new CHCs could successfully build and develop their Area Associations, it was felt that convincing local people that Area Associations would be able to serve as an effective local voice under the current proposals and that their work would make a real difference in terms of influencing change and safeguarding local interests. Whilst not supporting the notion of seven regional bodies; for reasons of practicality and in the interests of servicing effective meetings, the number of members proposed appeared to be reasonable. However, the Council did not support any form of public appointment and would wish to see ballots being held for all members with all Area Association Chairmen having the right to vote under reform proposals.

It was felt that the proposed catchment areas were too large to demonstrate true local accountability and that the proposal would not deliver the right level of accountability with respect to CHCs in Wales. The Council had no view on the question of the Board of CHCs in Wales being smaller than was currently or whether the new suggested size was about right. The arrangements for the right links being in place between CHCs and the National Advisory Board appeared reasonable.

RESOLVED that the Clerk convey the above to the Patient Experience Team, Quality, Standards and Safety Improvement Directorate, Welsh Assembly Government.

569. PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSION TO MEETINGS) ACT, 1960

RESOLVED that in view of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, the following matters be considered in private and that the power of exclusion of the public under Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings Act, 1960) be exercised.

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570. STAFFING MATTERS

Members were circulated with the reports of the Deputy Clerk (Administration) and the Clerk informing of staffing matters.

RESOLVED that the reports of the Deputy Clerk (Administration) and the Clerk to the Council, be received and adopted.

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The Meeting concluded at 6.05 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 14 May, 2009, adopted by the Council.