

20 December, 2022

LLANELLI RURAL COUNCIL

Minute Nos: 281 – 291

At a Meeting of the **RECREATION AND WELFARE COMMITTEE** of the Llanelli Rural Council held at the Council Chamber, Vauxhall Buildings, Vauxhall, Llanelli, and via remote attendance on Tuesday, 20 December, 2022 at 4.45 p.m.

Present: Cllr. D. M. Cundy (Chairman)

Cllrs.

T. M. Donoghue	S. N. Lewis
A. Evans	A. G. Morgan
E. M. Evans	S. K. Nurse
R. E. Evans	A. J. Rogers
J. P. Hart	W. E. Skinner
B. M. Williams	

281. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT

The Chairman referred to the recent demise of Mrs Mandy Jones, Administrative Officer at Llanelli Town Council, and as a mark of respect members and officers stood in silent tribute.

282. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

283. MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following members declared an interest in the following matters:

<i>Minute No.</i>	<i>Councillor</i>	<i>Interest</i>
286	S. N. Lewis	Personal interest – member, Dafen Welfare Management Committee.
286	A. J. Rogers	Personal interest – member, Dafen Welfare Management Committee.
289	J. P. Hart	Personal interest – member of Llwynhendy and Pemberton Forum and member of the steering group, Llwynhendy Hub.
290	S. N. Lewis	Personal and prejudicial – employee of Dafen Cricket Club and member, Dafen Welfare Management Committee.
290	A. J. Rogers	Personal interest – member, Dafen Welfare Management Committee.

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284. COMMUNITY FACILITIES – MAINTENANCE WORKS

RESOLVED that the Facilities Manager’s report on work undertaken be noted.

**285. DWYFOR GROWING SPACE
PROJECT UPDATE**

Further to Minute No. 115, members received an update report from the Community Development Officer (CDO) on recent activity at Dwyfor Community Growing Space.

Members were informed that individuals, organisations and local community groups that had previously shown an interest had been provided with updates and invitations to encourage them to actively get involved in the growing space project in the run up to its official opening to coincide with the beginning of the growing season in 2023. Furthermore, all properties that backed on to the growing space were hand delivered information leaflets inviting residents to get involved and to provide the council with feedback based on their initial views of what was being planned.

Encouragingly, a series of meetings had been held with a handful of individuals and groups in recent months and there was a willingness to get involved once access arrangements and guidance had been provided.

The CDO commented that one of the local groups, Incredible Edible Carmarthenshire (IEC), had been very proactive and had taken a keen interest in getting involved. Its volunteers had started planning ahead and on 11 December 2022, conducted a litter pick in and around the gardens. Its advice and requests had been noted and would help inform the final agreement document and plan for growing space users. IEC wished to run a monthly ‘Seed Library’ from Dwyfor.

South Cefncaeau (Ty Enfys) Family Centre had been given a tour of the site and would like to adopt up to two raised beds. It would also like to be involved in the planning and development of the biodiversity area earmarked for the site. Furthermore, Carmarthenshire Young Children’s Association (CYCA), Llanelli Mind, Mencap and Threshold had been approached and wished to meet in order to find out more about the project. Also a fact finding meeting with Foothold Cymru, a local organisation which operated its own community growing scheme, had been held to garner useful information.

On 7 December, 2022, council officers and representatives of the IEC attended a ‘Setting Up and Running Allotments’ session provided by Social Farms & Gardens. A tour was provided of a working community growing space and allotments in Bridgend, where the co-ordinator provided salient advice on starting up and running a community growing space. The information from this session would help inform the occupancy agreements that would be set up for groups and individuals.

The CDO then guided members through the next steps for preparing the site. A plan of action would be drawn up in conjunction with interested parties. In order to ensure the council was approaching the site in a manner that was attractive to the IEC volunteers and potential new users, the recommendations made thus far by the IEC needed to be captured and put to them for confirmation.

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In terms of the next steps it was necessary to develop an occupancy agreement for groups and individuals which outlined the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders. Further advertising of the project in the community and with nearby schools would also take place.

The CDO then referred to the completion of site infrastructure works and what currently remained outstanding but which nevertheless would be completed in time for the official opening of the site in 2023. These works were connected with the drawdown of the grant funding received from Carmarthenshire County Council, and formed part of the legal agreement which regulated the asset transfer of the site to the council.

Members were also informed that the IEC had suggested that a survey of the space was carried out by Llanelli Naturalists and a meeting would be arranged with this local group and also with Carmarthenshire County Council's biodiversity officer, regarding this suggestion.

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED that:

1. The report be noted.
2. Officers be authorised to co-ordinate initial community access to the site and also to draft an occupancy agreement for the growing space but in so doing the proposed fee outlined in the report to support the issuing of the occupancy agreement be revised upwards and re-presented for further consideration by the committee prior to the opening of the growing space at the beginning of the growing season in 2023.

286. DAFEN PARK – FOOTBALL PITCH

Cllr. S. N. Lewis and A. J. Rogers declared a personal interest in the following item as they were both members of Dafen Welfare Management Committee.

Members received correspondence from the secretary, Dafen AFC regarding the possibility of extending the width of the football pitch at Dafen Park.

Dafen AFC was looking to progress the club through the Welsh football pyramid but unfortunately the football pitch width did not meet the required criterion and needed to be widened by an additional three metres to comply with league requirements. The football club informed that it had already held initial talks with Hywel Dda University Health Board representatives regarding the possible acquisition of a strip of land from the Prince Philip Hospital estate to facilitate increasing the width of the pitch. If the extra land could be acquired, the football club was seeking the council's view as to whether the council would be prepared to maintain it under its programme of routine maintenance of the pitch.

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED that the request be supported in principle, but officers meet with representatives of the football club to discuss how best to accommodate the request, given the different parties involved with the potential conveyance of the strip of land from Hywel Dda University Health Board and because Carmarthenshire County Council, the landlord of Dafen Park, had yet to formally engross the lease to formally transfer the park to Llanelli Rural Council. Moreover, and as an adjunct to the discussion, officers shall impress upon the

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football club, that further development of the pitch and associated features beyond this current proposal and which might be required to satisfy future league status in the event of the prospect of meritocratic promotion through the league structure by the club, would not be supported. The pitch formed part of a public park and the recreational space must be retained for the general use and enjoyment by members of the public. Therefore, the ongoing development and upkeep of the park was most unlikely to align with the club's potential ambitions and plans should it desire to further enhance the pitch and its general facilities to safeguard or enhance the club's future league status.

**287. SANDY AND STRADEY COMMUNITY HALL
STORAGE SHED**

Correspondence was received from the Leader, Cylch Meithrin Pwll, requesting permission from the council to erect a storage shed to the rear of Sandy and Stradey Community Hall.

The cost of the storage shed would be met by Cylch Meithrin Pwll. Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED that permission be granted for a storage shed to be placed to the rear of Sandy and Stradey Community Hall, on the strict understanding the permission does not confer any business rights over the use and occupation of the shed or community hall. Furthermore, a simple legal undertaking shall be formulated to set out the limited rights and responsibilities to regulate the shed's use by the Cylch Meithrin and which indemnified the council and hall management committee against any future claims, loss or damage associated with the use of the facility.

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

RESOLVED that in view of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, the following matter itemised under Minute No. 289 below shall 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.

**289. CAPITAL SCHEME PROGRAMME AND ASSOCIATED
FUNDING 2023 – 2027**

Cllr. J. P. Hart declared a personal interest in the following item as he was member of Llwynhendy and Pemberton Forum and member of the steering group, Llwynhendy Hub.

Members considered the clerk's report on a capital scheme programme which could be delivered over the electoral life cycle of the council up to 2027. The report also suggested a cost-effective way of funding the schemes, which if approved, would have a neutral impact on the council's budget arrangements over the same period.

Three capital scheme projects had been previously prioritised by the council and identified in earmarked reserves. Details of the projects and the sums allocated to them were as follows:

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	£
• A new play area, Cilsaig, Dafen	52,000
• A new play area and refurbishment scheme, Ponthenri Recreation Ground	69,050
• A new play area in Parc Richard, Penygraig, Bynea	34,000

In addition to these three capital projects, the council was committed to working with Our Llwynhendy and other stakeholders to deliver the Llwynhendy Hub project. The council's capital funding contribution towards this project was to be met by taking out a loan with the Public Works Loan Board, subject to the council receiving Welsh Government borrowing approval in the first instance.

The clerk stated the council had steadily built up the earmarked reserves over the last three years by allocating money to the three projects incrementally from its annual budget. It had done this by setting aside £71,000 per annum in the budget and splitting this sum across the three projects. Furthermore, for the first time this year the council had also set aside £37,140 in the budget in anticipation of taking out a loan to meet its capital contribution towards funding the Llwynhendy Hub project. The council intended to do this during the 2022/23 financial year. The sum of money was identified to cover a loan of up to a maximum of £600,000 but current economic conditions had seen interest rates rise sharply. The latest loan repayment tables had now increased to over £58,000 per annum for the same amount of borrowing over a term of 20 years. This was previously reported to the committee and was deemed too expensive given the revised project cost estimate had also significantly increased to £2.8 million resulting in a substantial increase of £1.2 million to deliver the project in its current form. Notwithstanding this, the sum of £37,140 was showing as a current spending commitment in the budget. Combining this sum with the £71,000 referenced earlier equated to £108,140 to potentially carry forward to the 2023/24 budget to offset capital project costs.

The clerk then referred to the council elections in May 2022, and that newly elected members had enquired about the possibility of funding a new play area in the Penywern/Sandy area of the Hengoed Ward. Whereas in other council areas, a request was made by the community sports groups in Felinfoel for external toilet facilities to be constructed as a small extension to the Phil Bennett OBE Resource Centre at Felinfoel Recreation Ground. Moreover, in Swiss Valley the renewal of the council's five year licence agreement of the reservoir with Dŵr Cymru/Welsh Water was seen as an ongoing priority commitment. The community adoption of the reservoir had been a great success but more work needed to be done to deliver its full potential as a local visitor attraction. Enhancing the visitor experience at the reservoir had entirely relied upon external grant support and this would continue. When examining all of these projects alongside current project commitments, the breadth of projects (both planned and desired) covered all seven of the council's electoral wards. The challenge for the council was how to deliver all of the above projects in a timely and affordable manner at a time of economic crisis and soaring rates of inflation.

Members were informed that since the May 2022 elections, one of the aims of the controlling group was to try and bring parity across all seven electoral wards by delivering schemes efficiently and economically in every ward without leaving a legacy of debt for the successor council to absorb in May 2027. To help achieve this, a different approach to raising sufficient capital funds would be needed because otherwise the restrictions of the council's current funding mechanism would not deliver this aim within the required timescale across all electoral wards.

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To deliver all of the capital projects within the current electoral cycle, it would be necessary to borrow money from the Public Works Loan Board. This would immediately release funds to do the works instead of taking several years to accrue funds under the current arrangements. This would eliminate the time lag in getting things done, meaning projects could be delivered in a timely manner without the protracted delay of saving the money for them in advance. This would better align the council's delivery strategy with community expectations.

To bring about a neutral impact on the council's annual budget arrangements, the clerk suggested the combined sum of £108,140 referred to earlier could be vired from existing budget heads to completely offset the annual loan repayment costs. Doing this would clear the debt and deliver all projects prior to the next council being elected in 2027, thereby leaving no financial legacy for the council to manage in future years.

It had been calculated that the council could borrow a maximum of £400,000 from the Public Works Loan Board over four years but not more than four and a half years at an interest rate of 4.22%. The annual loan repayment equated to £106,000 but no more than £107,000 based on November 2022 lending rates. If the council agreed to do this, it would have £400,000 to use immediately and the loan repayments would be completely paid off before May 2027. Whereas to save the equivalent sum through the annual budget would take at least four years, taking the council through to 2027 resulting in further delays with the prospect that not all projects would be completed.

The clerk commented that clearing the loan debt over the next four years would free-up funds in the budget for the next council to utilise as it saw fit. However, he reminded members that the loan repayments for Furnace Hall also ended in March 2027. This would free-up an additional sum of £38,440 meaning the next council elected in May 2027 would have £146,580 of un-committed money at its disposal which could be re-invested in the budget as the council then saw fit.

By way of illustration, members were then provided with an analysis of the capital schemes funding per electoral ward as follows:

BYNEA: It was proposed to top up the earmarked reserve for Penygraig Play Area by an additional £41,000. The current amount held in the earmarked reserve equated to £34,000 thereby raising the reserve to £75,000. There was also potential to access section 106 funding to bump up the reserve to £100,000 or more. This sum would provide for a large play area covering multiple age groups.

DAFEN: It was proposed to top up the earmarked reserve for Cilsaig Play Area by an additional £23,000. The current amount held in the earmarked reserve equated to £52,000 thereby raising the reserve to £75,000. This sum would provide for a play area but limited to younger age groups, given the small footprint of the land parcel.

FELINFOEL: It was proposed to set aside a contribution of £15,050 towards the provision of an external toilet block to be added to the Phil Bennett OBE Resource Centre. The contribution could be used to match-fund grant contributions from the national sports bodies such as the Football Association of Wales and the Welsh Rugby Union. A council contribution to the scheme would improve the chances of the clubs receiving grants by using it as match funding.

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GLYN: It was proposed to top up the earmarked reserve for Ponthenri Park by an additional £20,950. The current amount held in the earmarked reserve equated to £69,050, thereby raising the reserve to £90,000. The intention was to also apply to the Lottery for additional grant support. This was being co-ordinated by the local park committee. The combined sum of money would provide for extensive refurbishment of park facilities.

HENGOED: It was proposed to set aside £100,000 towards the provision of a brand new play area in the Penywern/Sandy area. This sum would provide for a large play area covering multiple age groups. Two areas of land had been earmarked for potential development.

PEMBERTON: It was proposed to set aside £200,000 as the council's contribution towards the Llwynhendy Hub project. It was envisaged that this would realise a revised estimated funding pot of £750,000 to deliver the project. This was made up of £200,000 from the council; £300,000 from Our Llwynhendy and £250,000 (net amount) from Welsh Government funding. This was on the assumption the Charitable Incorporated Organisation would be encouraged to apply to Welsh Government's Community Facilities Programme for the maximum grant award. Other funding was likely to be leveraged from section 106 funding and additional ancillary grant funds from the likes of the Shared Prosperity Fund and Landfill Tax. This would potentially increase the funding pot further still. It was too early to estimate by how much at this stage but the signs were positive that more grant funding could be added to the pot. This amount of funding would provide for a make-over of the existing building and perhaps a modest extension with internal reconfiguration of the existing space and current services as well as basic landscaping and the provision of a large play area on the adjoining field. Focussing on both elements would deliver the community aspirations identified in the Feasibility Study but at a more reasonable and sustainable cost. There was nothing to prevent the council from revisiting the project in future years based on a phased programme of work.

SWISS VALLEY: It was proposed to renew the five year community adoption agreement of the reservoir. This would help realise its full potential as a local visitor attraction. External grants would be pursued to deliver any additional enhancement so there was no capital impact on the council budget that would need to be addressed under the suggested borrowing arrangements.

During the discussion, the local member for the Glyn Ward, vehemently asserted that the sum allocated to the Ponthenri park project was insufficient and should be increased by an additional £10,000 at the least. The project had been previously earmarked by the council as a priority project and a new play area was desperately needed. Funds had been accrued over the last three years, and so providing an additional £10,000 to the illustrated sum would raise the earmarked reserve to £100,000. This would deliver a substantial play area either as a standalone project or as part of a wider scheme whereby it was the local community's intention to also submit a grant application to the Lottery to boost the project pot. This would mean the project could proceed regardless of whether the community grant bid was successful. Furthermore, increasing the allocated sum would provide parity with the brand new play area proposal identified for the Hengoed Ward, for which no funds had been previously accrued and yet the project had been identified to receive £100,000. Members fully concurred with the local member's stance and agreed in the interests of fairness, the sum allocated to the Glyn Ward was insufficient and should be increased to £30,950 and not £20,950 as illustrated.

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In regard to the £200,000 to be allocated to the Pemberton Ward as a council contribution to the Llwynhendy Hub project the local member expressed disappointment at the allocated amount. However, the clerk reiterated the successor council would be free to revisit the project if it wished, but irrespective of any future plans beyond 2027 the suggested funding approach did not detract from the original concept identified in the Feasibility Study and would accommodate phases being developed at a later date. The clerk then hypothesised how the current library building could be reconfigured to deliver the library service in a different way based on a similar operating model in Newcastle Emlyn. This would free-up considerable internal space to develop the building for community use. The clerk also remarked on how the surrounding field could be developed for recreational and leisure purposes to accommodate a substantial play area and associated landscaping.

Thereupon the council chairman and local member for Swiss Valley commented that while no capital commitment had been identified in the Swiss Valley Ward to be met from loan borrowing, the renewal of the community adoption agreement was imperative. The chairman commented that there was an expectation that the maintenance responsibility for the local footpath leading from Felinfoel to the reservoir (commonly referred to as the riverside walk) would be transferred from Carmarthenshire County Council to the Rural Council to complement the work achieved thus far in developing the reservoir as a local visitor attraction. Members of the Dafen Ward also remarked about the provision of footway lighting at Cilsaig and where did this feature in the programme and by way of reply the clerk confirmed that the estimate obtained last year would be carried forward for inclusion in next year's draft estimates of income and expenditure.

In drawing discussion to a close it was noted that committing to a capital programme to be completed by May 2027 provided focus to deliver projects in a timely manner and would help manage council resources more effectively by sticking to an agreed plan. Furthermore, all seven electoral wards would benefit from the capital programme and suggested funding approach without placing any additional financial strain on the budget. This would be a welcome measure at a time of economic hardship because of the current cost-of-living crisis. In addition to this, significant and ongoing public sector spending cuts were expected next year which would have an impact on how the council utilised its budget to support communities going forward. Adopting a new funding approach for capital projects would serve as a prudent measure as the council would need to demonstrate economy and restraint and thereby achieve better value for money at a time of great economic uncertainty, and it was

RECOMMENDED that:

1. The suggested capital programme be accepted and delivered over the remainder of the council electoral cycle to May 2027.
2. The suggested budget virements and funding mechanism be accepted but that a loan for £410,000 be taken out with the Public Works Loan Board over four years but not more than four and a half years so that the loan was completely repaid by 2027.
3. The council approves the capital programme and associated funding mechanism to deliver the projects and that it subsequently submits a borrowing approval application to Welsh Government to raise the necessary funds in the New Year.

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290. DAFEN CRICKET CLUB

Cllr. S. N. Lewis declared a personal and prejudicial interest in items (1) and (2) below because she was an employee of Dafen Cricket Club and also declared a personal interest because she was a member of Dafen Welfare Management Committee and left the meeting before discussion commenced. Cllr. A. J. Rogers declared a personal interest in items (1) and (2) below as he was a member of Dafen Welfare Management Committee.

(1) SPONSORSHIP BANNERS

Correspondence was received from the secretary, Dafen Cricket Club, requesting permission from the council to erect sponsorship banners on the bowling green fence at Dafen Park.

During discussion, officers made reference to the deteriorating condition of the bowling green fence and the potential impact of erecting banners permanently to it, with the banners likely to cause considerable further damage. Members were informed that banners could only be attached to the top half of the fence, and so potentially they would act like a sail during windy weather conditions and would likely cause irreparable damage to the fence given its general condition. Fences with sponsorship banners erected at Pwll Recreation Ground and Felinfoel Recreation Ground had suffered considerable storm damage in the recent past resulting in sections of fencing having to be replaced. Moreover, members were also informed that the bowling green fence was due to be replaced in 2023 in any event and it was,

RESOLVED that permission be granted in principle to erect sponsorship banners, but given the deteriorating condition of the bowling green fence and the likelihood of the fence having to be replaced in the near future, officers meet with representatives of Dafen Cricket Club to ascertain the most suitable location in the park grounds for the placement of the banners, either on a temporary or permanent basis.

(2) LOPPING OF TREE

As part of the same correspondence received from the secretary, Dafen Cricket Club, as referred to in (1) above, the club had also requested permission for branches to be lopped to a particular tree in the park which was growing behind the cricket scoreboard. The branches had started to grow over the top and sides of the scoreboard and would interfere with the club's plans to upgrade the scoreboard to a digital scoreboard with solar panels attached to it. The club had received grant funding to upgrade the scoreboard but could not proceed with the work if the branches were left insitu.

Members were informed that professional assessment of the tree revealed that removing the tree branches would create an imbalance to the trunk thereby making the tree unsafe. Therefore, the tree would have to be felled for the work to proceed. A quotation to fell the tree had been received which amounted to £650, and it was

RESOLVED that officers meet with representatives of Dafen Cricket Club to discuss the potential removal of the tree and that the cost of felling the tree and replacing it with another tree in a different area of the park grounds shall be met by the club, if it wished to proceed with plans to upgrade the scoreboard.

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FURTHER RESOLVED that in the interests of health and safety, officers also ascertain further information about the structural integrity of the cricket scoreboard to ensure it was capable of accommodating the extra loading associated with the number of solar panels to be fitted to the scoreboard.

291. SEASONAL GREETINGS

The Chairman wished members and staff a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

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The Meeting concluded at 5.53 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 January, 2023 adopted by the Council.