

19 December, 2023

LLANELLI RURAL COUNCIL

Minute Nos: 277 – 285

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, 19 December, 2023 at 4.45 p.m.

Present: Cllr. A. J. Rogers (Vice – Chairman (in the Chair))

Cllrs.

D. M. Cundy J. P. Hart
T. M. Donoghue S. N. Lewis
N. Evans J. S. Phillips
R. E. Evans W. E. Skinner
A. G. Stephens

Absent: A. G. Morgan

277. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. E. M. Evans (Cllr. N. Evans deputising), B. M. Williams (Cllr. W. E. Skinner deputising) and O. Williams.

278. MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following members declared an interest in the following matters:

<i>Minute No.</i>	<i>Councillor</i>	<i>Interest</i>
280	T. M. Donoghue	Personal interest – her husband was a committee member of Llanelli and District Civic Society.
281	J. P. Hart	Personal interest – member, Llwynhendy and Pemberton Forum, member of the Our Llwynhendy steering group, Llwynhendy Hub steering group and committee member Pro-vision Llwynhendy.
281	A. G. Stephens	Personal interest – Trustee and Treasurer, Pro-vision Llwynhendy.
283	N. Evans	Personal interest – member, Dafen Welfare Management Committee.
283	R. E. Evans	Personal interest – member, Dafen Welfare Management Committee.

19 December, 2023

<i>Minute No.</i>	<i>Councillor</i>	<i>Interest</i>
283	S. N. Lewis	Personal interest – member, Dafen Welfare Management Committee.
283	A. J. Rogers	Personal interest – member, Dafen Welfare Management Committee.

279. COMMUNITY FACILITIES – MAINTENANCE WORKS

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

280. RABY’S FURNACE, LLANELLI

Cllr. T. M. Donoghue declared a personal interest in the following matter as her husband was a committee member, Llanelli and District Civic Society.

Members received correspondence from the Secretary, Llanelli and District Civic Society enquiring if the council would support a campaign to bring Raby’s Furnace structure into public ownership and undertake a restoration scheme and open it to tourists.

The secretary stated that the building was privately owned but there were no ownership details held with the Land Registry.

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED that the letter be noted and the clerk responds to the Secretary, Llanelli and District Civic Society stating that the council could not justify such a project on the basis of it being unviable and unsustainable for the council to contemplate asset transferring the property.

281. LLWYNHENDY HUB PROJECT

Cllr. J. P. Hart declared a personal interest in the following matter because he was a member of Llwynhendy and Pemberton Forum, member of the Our Llwynhendy steering group, Llwynhendy Hub steering group and committee member Pro-vision Llwynhendy. Cllr. A. G. Stephens declared a personal interest in the following matter because he was a Trustee and the Treasurer of Pro-Vision Llwynhendy.

Further to Minute No. 187, the Community Development Officer provided members with information on the budget allocated for professional fees in getting Llwynhendy Community Hub building project to a tender ready state and to seek guidance on the next course of action.

Members were informed, the invitation to tender for the capital build works at Llwynhendy Library would be issued in early January, 2024. The tenders to be returned by mid-late February, 2024.

19 December, 2023

The tender would request for the costs to be structured for phased delivery as well as complete works. The reason for this was so that any funding shortfall was taken into account and delivery could be broken down into deliverable segments that matches the budget available at the time.

The Community Development Officer stated that on 4 December, 2023, the council contacted local building contractors to gauge their interest in the project, enquiring whether they would like to receive a formal invitation to tender. The tender document was being put together by W. Griffiths Architects. This work had been done in conjunction with other professionals that had given input on structural, mechanical and electrical engineering and sustainable drainage solutions (SuDS). The architect was in regular contact with the local planning authority ensuring that the conditions set in the planning permission were actioned.

Members were further informed that in October 2022, 'Our Llwynhendy' agreed to meet the £35,000 costs the council originally requested of the Lottery Community Fund, for the purpose of professional design fees associated in getting a capital project to tender ready stage. Budget spend so far had reached £30,507.50 and a final architect bill of £6,500 for preparing and finalising the tender specification was received on 4 December, 2023.

The reason the professional fees had exceeded the budget was attributed to the additional architect works in preparing a reduced scheme which meant a further £6,000 was billed between March and September, 2023.

In addition, there were design costs which needed to be met prior to the invitation to tender being issued in January:

1. Mechanical and Electrical engineering – £7,900
2. Structural Engineering – up to £3,750
3. SuDS – up to £2,500

With the £35,000 from Our Llwynhendy being allocated, a deficit of £2,007.50 architect costs and the additional professional costs referenced above had to be met in order to issue the tender.

'Our Llwynhendy' initially committed £350,000 in support of the project. From this, a sum of £20,378 in professional fees was spent between April, 2021 and April, 2022. A further £35,000 was expected to be spent up to December, 2023. This left a balance of £294,622 from the initial pledge. A further sum of £100,000 had been earmarked for phase 1 of the project which would go towards the costs of the play area and environmental enhancements, leaving £194,622 to be put towards phase 2 - the capital build works for the reconfiguration of the library.

The Community Development Officer thereupon reported upon a grant opportunity by applying to 'The Community Ownership Fund' (COF) which was a UK Government grant available to public bodies including community councils that wish to take ownership of assets at risk of loss to the community. Up to £250,000 of capital funding was available. In addition to this, there was up to £50,000 revenue funding available to apply for. There were four funding rounds per year held at regular intervals. The fund closed for applications in March 2025.

19 December, 2023

The council made a formal expression of interest (EOI) and received a reply on 16 November, 2023. The response was positive and welcomed a full application.

In the EOI response letter the funders eluded to the fact to “consider whether your project could benefit from revenue support – this funding does not need to be matched and can be used to assist with first year running costs, such as energy bills and staff”. The possibility of creating a job role along with meeting first year running costs would in all likelihood make the council’s bid to COF far stronger.

Other examples of revenue costs outlined in the guidance for the grant included professional fees that would pay for the architect and surveyors during the build phase. It would also cover costs for events or sessional workers at the hub. A marketing budget could also be provided by the grant.

The next funding window that would coincide with the return of tender bids would probably lead to a full application to the fund in April, 2024 albeit this grant deadline had not yet been revealed by the grant administrators.

The COF funding application outcome was likely to be known within three months of the application submission deadline, estimated to be July 2024. Should the council’s application be approved, there would then follow a formal period for agreeing to the grant terms before a grant start date was allocated by the fund administrators. The impact of all of this meant the build could begin in September 2024 and this would be set out in the tender specification.

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED that:

1. The project update report be noted with pleasure.
2. The total additional professional fees in the sum of £16,157.50 set out in the report and which was deemed as actual and necessary costs to finalise the tender, be authorised and met from two funding sources, namely from the remaining balance of ‘Our Llwynhendy’ s’ £35,000 contribution and from the council’s £200,000 earmarked reserve contribution for the project. Thereby reducing the earmarked reserve to £183,842.50.
3. Officers prepare a full grant bid to the ‘Community Ownership Fund’ in the sum of £250,000 but to include in the application an additional revenue bid in the sum of £50,000 to put towards first year operational costs and to create an employment opportunity at Llwynhendy Hub.

282. 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.

283. ASTROTURF - DAFEN PARK

Cllrs. N. Evans, R. E. Evans, S. N. Lewis and A. J. Rogers declared personal interests in the following matter as they were members of Dafen Welfare Management Committee.

19 December, 2023

Members received a report from the Technical and General Operations Manager on the general management and hire arrangements for the artificial sports surface facility at Dafen Park.

Hire charges were introduced in August 2022 and the council recovered £5,225 in hire fees for the 12 month period. The income recovery aligned with the original projected estimates. The aim was to build up sufficient surplus income as an earmarked reserve to offset a significant amount of the costs of replacing the surface material in 8 to 10 years' time. The cost of the surface when installed was £58,600.

The hire charge was set at £10 + VAT per hour. Subsequently the council was advised of a decision by HMRC on the treatment of VAT in regard to fees charged for the hiring of sports facilities by local authorities. This had resulted in credit payment returning the 20% VAT to the non-profit community based organisations that had hired the facility.

Expenditure for maintenance and repairs for the 12 month period was £530.13.

The demand for the facility from community sports teams located within the council's area was immediate and had grown steadily over the initial first year of operation. Many teams make seasonal block bookings. Interest continued to grow with several teams and groups regularly seeking to book sessions. Several private business operators had hired the facility and children's parties and private bookings had taken place.

Popular sessions were sought during weekday evenings in the autumn and winter period. There was less demand in the summer months and on the weekends. The facility was rarely used during weekday daytimes.

Preventing unauthorised access had been a significant issue. The codes for the combination locks were often shared and unauthorised access did take place. This presented the risk of damage to the surface from users not following the rules in regard to permitted footwear. Uncontrolled access could also present a risk of personal injury from slips and falls and also exposed the facility to anti-social behaviour and vandalism. Installing an electronic access control system would eliminate unauthorised access.

The quality of the floodlighting was regularly reported as a problem by hirers. Some enquiries fail to materialise into bookings as the teams consider the floodlighting inadequate.

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED that:

1. The report be noted.
2. The hire fee to remain at £10 per hour from 1 April, 2024, until such time as the asset transfer of Dafen Park had been completed with the engrossment of the lease with the landlord, Carmarthenshire County Council.
3. The installation of a sophisticated electronic access control system estimated at £3,010 be approved but subject to a further committee report on the evaluation of proprietary systems and the subsequent quotations received. Furthermore, the upgrade of the existing set of floodlights estimated at £3,950 also be approved, based upon the same specification as the floodlights installed at the council's multi use games area in Llwynhendy and subject to a further committee report on quotations received.

19 December, 2023

4. The funding for both the access control system and floodlights be met from a virement from the remaining budget for the fully completed Pwll Bach Lane lighting scheme in Dafen, in view of the anticipated substantial cost saving on the original estimate for this project.

284. PLAY AREA TENDER SPECIFICATIONS

Members considered the report of the Technical and General Operations Manager on the tender specification proposals for the play areas at:

- Gwili Fields, Llwynhendy
- Clos Cilsaig, Dafen
- Penygraig, Bynea

The communities at Clos Cilsaig, Gwili Fields and Penygraig had contributed to a consultation survey that garnered views in regard to the type of play equipment residents wished to see provided at the new play areas.

The consultation undertaken at Gwili Fields also sought residents' views on the development of environmental enhancements.

The draft tender specification documents were circulated as part of the report for information. The Technical and General Operations Manager commented the tenders followed a standard format that provided the contractors with information they required to produce a comprehensive tender and the form of contract. Each tender considered the individual site plan and detailed any complexities that needed to be considered. Returned tender bids would be evaluated and scored in accordance to the methodology outlined in the tender document.

The result of the community consultation would be provided to the contractors highlighting the 'must haves' as well as any 'desirable' aspects of play equipment, materials and design aesthetic and/or themes. However, members were advised to omit and or add certain facilities from each of the tender documents for the reasons outlined in the report but specifically:

- The omission of a zip wire and sand pit at Clos Cilsaig, Dafen but the inclusion of a new boundary fence.
- The omission of a sand pit at Penygraig, Bynea but the inclusion of a multi-use ball games area but to be installed by the council's DLO team outside of the scope of the play scheme tender.
- The omission of a splash park at Gwili Fields.

The proposals set out in the tender specifications would provide play experience for children of all ages and abilities and would revive and enhance the recreational use of the areas for adults and children alike.

The tender proposals should consider the public consultation, available budgets, site limitation, and value for money and ongoing cost of ownership.

Following discussion, it was

19 December, 2023

RESOLVED that:

1. The tender invitation for Clos Cilsaig play area, Dafen for the contract value of £72,000 be approved, with a further £3,000 being identified for a new boundary fence bringing the total sum to £75,000 to deliver the project from council budgets.
2. The tender invitation for Penygraig play area, Bynea for a contract value of £120,000 be approved. This was made up of a contribution of £75,000 from council budgets and £45,000 from Section 106 funding earmarked for the scheme and to be applied for from Carmarthenshire County Council.
3. Additional Section 106 funding in the sum of £30,000 be approved and applied for to Carmarthenshire County Council to develop a MUGA facility at Penygraig play area to be procured outside of the tender process.
4. The tender for Gwili Fields, Llwynhendy for a contract value of £200,000 be approved, with £10,000 also being transferred to top up the fund for carrying out the planned environmental enhancements at the fields but specifically to address the extremely wet ground conditions through the design of a Sustainable Urban Drainage System, increasing the original budget to £62,500. The costs to be met from a grant to the council from the Shared Prosperity Fund in the sum of £162,500 and £100,000 contribution from ‘Our Llwynhendy’.

285. SEASONAL GREETINGS

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

.....

The Meeting concluded at 5.38 p.m.

.....

The afore-mentioned Minutes were declared to be a true record of the proceedings and signed by the Chairman presiding thereat and were, on 9 January, 2024 adopted by the Council.