

7 February, 2024

**LLANELLI RURAL COUNCIL**

**Minute Nos: 346 – 350**

At a Meeting of the **POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE** of the Llanelli Rural Council held at the Council Chamber, Vauxhall Buildings, Vauxhall, Llanelli, and via remote attendance on Wednesday, 7 February, 2024 at 4.45 p.m.

**Present:** Cllr. R. E. Evans (Chairman)

**Cllrs.**

S. R. Bowen	J. S. Phillips
D. M. Cundy	A. J. Rogers
N. Evans	W. E. Skinner
S. N. Lewis	A. G. Stephens

**Absent:** A. Evans, S. M. T. Ford

**346. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. J. P. Hart and B. M. Williams (Cllr. A. J. Rogers deputising).

**347. MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made.

**348. 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.

**349. MANAGEMENT OF COMMUNITY FACILITIES**

Members received the report of the clerk informing of the council's revisit of the community facilities management model and to seek members' views as to whether the current model remained fit for purpose.

Over the course of the current civic year, members had expressed dissatisfaction with the general management arrangements of some of the council's community buildings. Members had raised concerns at the Policy and Resources Committee when discussing service plans; at the Recreation and Welfare Committee when considering awarding annual grants to certain

**7 February, 2024**

hall management committees; and also at the Finance and General Purposes Committee when discussing income and expenditure reports.

By way of information this subject was presented to council at its meeting on 24 March, 2021. The council decided to not make any changes to the existing policy at the time and resolved that its policy of collaborating with hall management committees to administer community facilities on a day to day basis should continue (to which Minute No. 139, 24 March, 2021 refers).

The clerk took members through a detailed table included in the report, summarising the status of the council's voluntary hall management committees, highlighting the risk rating of the hall management committees' involvement in current operations.

The clerk then informed members on how the council might better manage and mitigate risk. It had been witnessed over the years the fortunes of the council's hall management committees and by extension the impact this had on the council's premises was solely reliant on a good level of voluntary support from members of the public.

Experience had shown that problems arose when community interest waned. In the past, several of the council's buildings had struggled but only to then prosper again following a recruitment drive or general call for help.

The extent of volunteer support differed greatly from building to building and invariably changes over time. The public's attitude to volunteering on the council's hall management committees had taken a downward turn. Regrettably society had changed and it was becoming increasingly difficult to identify and recruit a sufficient number of able and willing people who were prepared to give up some of their time to help manage the council's community facilities on a voluntary basis.

Relying on volunteers to manage the council's community buildings carried a fair degree of risk. Volunteers were not recruited under a contract of employment and could simply walk away from their management responsibilities at a moment's notice. Relying on volunteers therefore was not a long term sustainable solution.

The uncertainty of not knowing what the future holds in terms of how long volunteers were prepared to devote time to help the council manage its facilities, put the council on a constant state of alert. The council could not take anything for granted and this had an impact on its governance arrangements. The level of attention and resources required to monitor how every management committee was performing was an ongoing process for both members and officers, which took up time. The council was not in full control of the situation and the policy required a lot of scrutiny. Instead of being proactive the council had to react to situations when having to intervene with management committee issues. This also undermined and weakened the council's general governance arrangements, thereby increasing the risk of something going wrong and possibly causing unacceptable loss or harm to the council.

The council had two alternative options to consider when contemplating making changes to its existing policy. These options were the same as the options presented during the previous review namely:

**7 February, 2024**

- To administer community facilities in-house by council staff taking on the responsibility. In this instance, the council's voluntary management committees would no longer be required and so they would disband. This option would significantly reduce risk and strengthen governance.
- A mix of voluntary managed facilities along with council staff taking permanent responsibility for a select number of premises. This option paved the way for greater control but didn't completely eliminate risk but it would buy time for the council to take back management control gradually on a phased basis.

There were pros and cons in pursuing the alternative options, but the current circumstances suggested the status quo could no longer be maintained by keeping faith with the existing policy.

It was recommended that the initial focus of attention should concentrate on the four council premises identified in the report and which carried medium to high risk.

It was suggested that the existing policy was amended so that there was a mix of management arrangements. In regard to the buildings identified as a medium to high risk, the council was invited to consider managing these facilities in-house. All other halls would be managed by the local voluntary management committees for the time being for the simple reason these properties were thriving and doing well under the existing policy and were of low risk.

In-house management control of the buildings would not be a quick or straightforward process to accomplish. The council would need to allow sufficient preparation time in order to perform due diligence, including researching several subject areas where economies of scale could be used to deliver the most economic and financially affordable management solution. Adopting a considered and sustainable approach would be fundamental in support of a seamless transfer of control.

A twelve month time frame was suggested to address the matters with a view of then enacting the transfers on 1 April, 2025.

Following discussion, it was

**RESOLVED** that the report recommendations be accepted in full and that discussions commence with the affected hall management committees identified for transfer.

**FURTHER RESOLVED** that to help defray initial transfer and start-up costs, a contingency sum of £8,000 be included in the council's income and expenditure estimates for 2024/25, subject to the Recreation and Welfare Committee's agreement.

### **350. ESTIMATES OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE FOR 2024/25**

Members were presented with a preliminary report on estimates of income and expenditure for the committee for 2024/25 and it was,

**7 February, 2024**

**RESOLVED** that:

- (1) The list of expenditure items annotated in the report be included within the committee's draft estimates of income and expenditure for 2024/25 and approved for council consideration.
- (2) To await the special meeting of the council to discuss the same.

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The meeting concluded at 5.32 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 13 February, 2024, adopted by the Council.