

**13 February, 2024**

**LLANELLI RURAL COUNCIL**

**Minute Nos: 356 – 365**

At a **COUNCIL** Meeting of the Llanelli Rural Council hosted at the Council Chamber, Vauxhall Buildings, Vauxhall, Llanelli, and via remote attendance on Tuesday, 13 February, 2024 at 6.00 p.m.

**Present:** Cllr. J. S. Phillips (Chairman)

**Cllrs.**

S. R. Bowen	R. E. Evans
S. L. Davies	S. N. Lewis
T. M. Donoghue	A. G. Morgan
A. Evans	A. J. Rogers
E. M. Evans	W. E. Skinner
N. Evans	A. G. Stephens

**Absent:** S. M. T. Ford, S. K. Nurse

**356. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT**

The Chairman referred to the recent demise of Mr T. J. Jones, former councillor and past council chairman, and as a mark of respect members and officers stood in silent tribute.

**357. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. D. M. Cundy, M. V. Davies, J. P. Hart, N. A. Stephens, B. M. Williams and O. Williams.

**358. MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made.

**359. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation in the proceedings.

**13 February, 2024**

**360. 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	9 January, 2024
Planning and Liaison Committee	15 January, 2024
Recreation and Welfare Committee	16 January, 2024
Learning and Development Consultative Committee	25 January, 2024
Special Meeting of the Civic and Ceremonial Committee	5 February, 2024
Planning and Liaison Committee	5 February, 2024
Special Meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee	6 February, 2024
Special Meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee	7 February, 2024
Special Meeting of the Recreation and Welfare Committee	8 February, 2024

**361. STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS (CONSOLIDATED)**

Members received the council's certified statement of accounts from Audit Wales. The statement of accounts spanned six successive financial years and the Auditor General for Wales had issued an unqualified opinion (clean bill of health) in respect of all six sets of accounts. The Finance Manager summarised where general changes had been made to the financial information originally presented in the respective statement of accounts since the statements had been presented to the council for approval. The changes were necessary to compile the accounts using financial reporting standard FRS 102 and to rectify some arithmetical accounting errors discovered during the audit including the rounding up and down of figures, all of which impacted the opening and closing balances of the accounts going from one financial year to the next.

The Clerk thereupon thanked the Finance Manager for all her hard work and diligence in responding to the audit and informed members the council was the only community council in Wales to receive this bespoke audit programme because its budget had exceeded the £2.5 million threshold for smaller relevant bodies as provided for in the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014. The bespoke audit programme was a transaction based audit and comprised a combination of extensive and detailed digital information exchanges between the Finance Manager and the auditors via email correspondence as well as periodic audit visits made by different auditors to the council offices. In hindsight the audit programme proved to be a robust examination of the council's financial management framework and records. It was pleasing to receive the Auditor General for Wales' unqualified opinion on the accounts for all six financial years. This served as independent corroboration that the council had good financial management and governance arrangements in place.

Following discussion and the Clerk having responded to questions posed about the reasons for the delay in certifying the accounts and the likely fees to be levied upon the council by Audit Wales in connection with the bespoke audit programme, it was

**13 February, 2024**

**RESOLVED** that the council's certified statement of accounts, confirming an unqualified audit opinion be received, accepted and approved for the six successive financial years ending:

31 March, 2018; 31 March, 2019; 31 March, 2020; 31 March, 2021; 31 March, 2022 and 31 March, 2023.

**362. LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND ELECTIONS (WALES) ACT 2021  
ELIGIBLE COMMUNITY COUNCIL STATUS**

Members received the clerk's report seeking a formal resolution from the council confirming it was an 'eligible community council' for the purpose of using the General Power of Competence (GPoC).

The report addressed the following points:

- Applying GPoC as a power of first resort
- How the council satisfied the three eligibility conditions
- Exercising GPoC for a commercial purpose
- The power to trade in the council's ordinary functions
- GPoC limitations and restrictions
- Annual review of the council's eligibility status
- Ceasing to be an eligible community council
- The dis-application of the use of the limited spending power by the council under Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 when resolving itself to be an eligible community council
- The well-being power introduced under the Local Government Act 2000 being repealed on 5 May 2022 following the provisions relating to GPoC being brought into force.

Becoming an eligible community council would prevent the council from possibly acting beyond its powers (*ultra vires*) in the future and would allow it to act more widely in serving the community going forward. As a power of first resort the GPoC had no spending limitations whereas the section 137 power only permitted the council to spend a limited amount of money on activities for which the council had no specific power.

During discussion the clerk cited a number of instances and examples of how the council could make use of the GPoC both immediately and possibly in the future, and it was

**RESOLVED** that it be confirmed, the council is as an 'eligible community council' for the purpose of using the General Power of Competence.

*During the discussion of the above Cllr. S. L. Davies left the meeting.*

**13 February, 2024**

**363. CORPORATE RISK ASESMENT 2023/2024**

Members considered the report of the Deputy Clerk attaching the council's Risk Management Policy and Corporate Risk Assessment for 2023/24. The report also presented action plans relating to 2022/2023 and the current financial year.

During the ensuing discussion, members generally enquired as to the likelihood of officers accomplishing the target completion dates set out in the 2023/24 action plan owing to existing capacity issues and whether there was sufficient staff capacity built in to the council's budget plans for the forthcoming financial year.

Having considered the respective replies of the Clerk and Deputy Clerk and their reasoning and suggestions, which entailed a mix of measures, namely to free up more staff time by making greater use of digital technology and tools to automate and streamline a number of paper based systems and general work flow processes, and by increasing staff capacity through the council's current staff re-organisation programme which commenced in earnest in January 2024, with a major restructure which had been fully budgeted for in the council's estimates of income and expenditure for 2024/25. Moreover, the council had also previously recruited an additional person to join its DLO Team, with a view to appointing another person in due course as part of wider plans to increase staff numbers but by making affordable incremental changes to the staff hierarchy over the next few years. It was envisaged that an additional technical post was also likely to be needed to assist the council with its risk management activities but until an evaluation could be made over the impact of the current raft of staff changes brought about in January, which needed time to bed-in, along with the desire to make greater use of digital technology to free up more staff time and which had yet to be assessed; it was difficult to predict with any absolute certainty at this point in time what additional posts might be still needed, and it was

**RESOLVED** that officers' remarks be noted and the Risk Management Policy and the Corporate Risk Assessment and accompanying action plan for 2023/24 be accepted.

*During the discussion of the above Cllrs. A. G. Morgan and W. E. Skinner left the meeting.*

**364. DIGITAL HEALTH OF COMMUNITY AND TOWN COUNCILS**

Members considered a general invitation from the Digital Project Manager, One Voice Wales to attend a series of free remote training events to be held over late February and March 2024.

Following discussion, it was

**RESOLVED** that interested members attend the online events.

**365. LLANELLI JOINT BURIAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Members received the following Minutes of a meeting of the Llanelli Joint Burial Advisory Committee held on 13 December 2023:

**13 February, 2024**

“At the Meeting of the Llanelli Joint Burial Advisory Committee held at Vauxhall Buildings, Vauxhall, Llanelli, and via remote attendance on Wednesday, 13 December 2023 at 4:00 pm.

Present: Cllr. A. J. Rogers (Chairman)

Cllrs.

D. L. Darkin                      N. Evans  
T. M. Donoghue                S. N. Lewis  
   J. S. Phillips

Together with Mr A. Davies (Town Clerk)

29.     APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. S. Greaney, B. A. L. Roberts and J. Williams.

30.     MEMBERS’ DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

31.     MINUTES

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

Special Meeting                      -                      8 November 2023

32.     MATTERS ARISING  
           DRAFT INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ESTIMATES

Further to Minute No. 24, the Secretary informed members of the fall in interest rates since the last meeting and after a brief discussion it was

RECOMMENDED not to alter the rate of 3% to be applied to the draft income and expenditure estimates

33.     INCOME AND EXPENDITURE REPORTS

RECOMMENDED that the income and expenditure report up to 31 October 2023 be noted.

**13 February, 2024**

.....”  
The meeting concluded at 4.05pm  
.....

**RESOLVED** that the minutes and the recommendations contained therein be received and accepted.

.....  
The meeting concluded at 6.53 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 12 March, 2024, adopted by the Council.