

18 June, 2024

LLANELLI RURAL COUNCIL

Minute Nos: 53 – 58

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, 18 June, 2024 at 4.45 p.m.

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

Cllrs.

M. V. Davies	A. G. Morgan
T. M. Donoghue	J. S. Phillips
A. Evans	A. J. Rogers
E. M. Evans	W. E. Skinner
S. N. Lewis	A. G. Stephens

Absent: J. P. Hart

Together with Mr C. Griffiths, the council's consultant architect.

53. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Cllr. O. Williams (Cllr. A. Evans deputising).

54. MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr. A. G. Stephens declared a personal interest in Minute No. 57 as he was the Trustee and Treasurer, Pro-Vision, Llwynhendy.

55. COMMUNITY FACILITIES – MAINTENANCE WORKS

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

56. 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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57. LLWYNHENDY HUB PROJECT

Cllr. A. G. Stephens declared a personal interest in the following matters as he was a Trustee and the Treasurer of Pro-Vision Llwynhendy.

(1) TENDERS

Further to Minute No. 478 (7 May, 2024, refers), members received an update report from the council's consultant architect, Mr C. Griffiths in regard to the tenders received to deliver the project at Gwili Fields, Llwynhendy.

Since the matter was considered at the May 2024 meeting, additional information and clarification had been sought from both contractors with regards to the discrepancies in inclusions that were stated in their respective tender submissions and the different phasing of the planned works.

Members were informed that as a result of seeking supplementary information over the different phasing of the planned works making up the construction programme, contract durations were now comparable. Therefore, the remaining differences between the two sets of tenders related predominantly to window specification and firm price and the kitchen specification and firm price as well as the contractors' respective approaches to any variation required in response to the outcome of the council's grant application submission, which had been delayed.

In view of the grant delay, Mr Griffiths acknowledged the council was still in the funding rather than at contract award stage and so the period (16 weeks) under which the tender was binding was likely to be exceeded because the tender period would lapse on 12 August 2024. In light of the circumstances, it was considered preferable to keep negotiations going with the two contractors subject to their co-operation.

The clerk concurred that the council was not in a position at present to appoint a contractor because of the grant submission delay; this was beyond the council's control. He explained the council's £250,000 capital grant application to fund the construction work was prevented from being submitted to the UK Government's Community Ownership Fund (COF) because the grant scheme had been suspended by the Government because it had called a general election on 4 July 2024. No further work on the grant submission could be progressed because of the current pre-election period. Moreover, it was unclear what the fate of the COF programme was likely to be following the general election result. Thereupon the clerk presented various scenarios as to what might occur after the election and the possible impact of these scenarios in seeking grant funding and the subsequent knock on effect on the project start date.

Mr Griffiths advised that in view of the circumstances the council's nomination of a preferred contractor should coincide with the council's grant application outcome and the council's subsequent capacity to let a contract. Members concurred with this advice, and it was

RESOLVED that a further review of the grant situation and current tender submissions be arranged as soon as possible after the general election had taken place but in advance of the 16 week contract award deadline of the 12 August 2024.

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(2) PROJECT UPDATE

Members received the Community Development Officer's (CDO) general progress report which elaborated upon the council's grant application to UK Government's Community Ownership Fund (COF) referenced in (1) above. The report also addressed the total amount of match funding likely to be required to deliver the project now that tender prices were known, as well as informing about the requirement to submit a Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SUDS) application to Carmarthenshire County Council, for the development proposals.

In regard to match funding and whether more money could be identified, the CDO commented there was a potential shortfall of either £22,756 or £33,953 to put towards the total capital construction costs depending upon which building contractor was ultimately selected to do the works. This was predicated upon the council successfully applying for the £250,000 COF grant or another grant for the same amount. The council now had far more accurate costs based on the tenders received and so it was feasible and highly desirable to deliver the entire project in one fell swoop, without necessarily identifying another grant source to cover the capital shortfall. To make the strongest possible representation to the grant decision makers, the best outcome would be to demonstrate, that subject to the grant award, there was no capital shortfall to complete the project. The simplest way to achieve this was by the council and "Our Llwynhendy" both agreeing to fund the capital shortfall by increasing their match funding contributions on an equal basis. This approach was preferred for several reasons. It would be viewed very favourably with the grant decision makers and would strengthen the council's grant submission knowing that the council had all the funding secured to complete the project subject to receiving the grant award. Successfully applying for one grant award would save time with forecasting and commencing the project start date. Moreover, by delivering the project in its entirety all in one go, the project would be less expensive to deliver, because it would avoid having to perform separate phased works, thus avoiding additional contractor costs in not having to return to site and incurring duplicate preliminary costs.

Given the situation, the clerk recommended that the council agreed to meet the shortfall in total match funding on an equal basis with "Our Llwynhendy". He stated that officers recently met with "Our Llwynhendy" representatives to explain the rationale and whether the organisation would be prepared to increase its match funding contribution provided the council did the same. Members were informed the request would be considered at the organisation's next meeting on 26 June, 2024.

While the additional match funding shortfall hadn't been identified in the council's current budget estimates, it was possible to fund the council's share from general reserve balances and or a combination of budget virements from the council's 2024/25 budget. The clerk commented that general reserve balances had increased on the previous year by a further £34,000.

Members' attention was then drawn to a point of concern associated with a likely delay with the time needed by Carmarthenshire County Council's general processing of the council's SUDS application. No construction work could begin on the project as a whole including planned work on the provision of the new play area and the environmental enhancements until SUDS approval had been obtained.

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A recent council experience of the process, when having to submit a SUDS application for the installation of a brand new play scheme in Ponthenri Park, resulted in a 15 week turnaround from submission of the application to receiving approval. The council had appointed an engineer to work upon the council's SUDS application for the hub project and the application had been submitted to the county council on 14 June 2024.

If the application could not be determined quicker than the current 15 week processing period this would impact upon the potential start date of all construction works including causing a delay to the installation of the new play area and environmental enhancements forming part of the overall scheme.

Following lengthy discussion of all the issues identified in the CDO's report, including the impact of delays, it was

RESOLVED that:

1. The information contained in the report be noted.
2. Subject to contract award, the additional match funding shortfall sought from the council for either £11,378 or £16, 976.50 (this being the council's share to top up its current match funding contribution depending upon which contractor was ultimately awarded the building contract) be approved, provided "Our Llwynhendy" also agreed to contribute an identical sum of money.
3. The council's additional contribution towards the match funding shortfall shall be met from general reserve balances and if necessary from a combination of budget virements identified within the council's 2024/25 budget.

**58. FURNACE COMMUNITY HALL
BALCONY**

Further to Minute No. 188(1) (17 October, 2023, refers) members received the report of the Deputy Clerk on the repair scheme proposal in regard to the terrace structure at Furnace Community Hall.

The elevated terrace at Furnace Community Hall was primarily constructed from timber. The structure was supported by a galvanised steel frame, timber deck boards form the floor and large timber beams provide the sub structure.

A proprietary balustrade was installed around the perimeter of the terrace. The balustrade integrity was severely compromised. The system as originally installed did not comply with Building Regulations safety standards and the deterioration of the timber sub structure was also adding to its instability.

Several localised repairs had been undertaken to the timber deck boards and sub structure beams over recent years. In 2022 officers expressed concerns that the deterioration was escalating. In 2023 the safety concerns were elevated as deck timbers began to fail. Heras safety fencing had been installed to prevent access to the terrace as the risk of structural failure was significant.

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Structural engineering consultants Wyatt & Watts of 32 Queen Victoria Rd, Llanelli provided a non-destructive condition report and produced a repair scheme that allowed the council to seek competitive tenders for the refurbishment work. Minute 188(1), 17 October, 2024 refers.

The council allocated £30,000 in the 2023-2024 budget to undertake repairs to the terrace deck and balustrade systems. The lowest tender received was submitted by M. Taffetsauffer Building & Civil Engineering Contractors Ltd. of 15A Station Road, Llanelli for the sum of £35,981.82. Subsequently the budget was increased to £39,580 for the 2024-2025 budget to include a 10% contingency of £3,598.18.

The building contractor when removing the existing perimeter balustrade system and sections of the timber decking exposed large sections of the sub structure. The contractor reported concerns in regard to the poor condition of a significant number of deck boards and the load bearing timbers. An inspection took place on 23 May, 2024, by M. Watts (structural engineer) with council officers present.

The inspection discovered that the majority of the existing load bearing timber joists were in a worse condition than previously noted due to severe decay and rot along the top and end sections of the timbers. The initial inspection from below this area discovered defects in a number of the existing joists, however now the top surface of these joists had been fully exposed the scale of the decay was considerably more extensive than previously considered. It would appear that rainwater had become trapped between the decking boards on top of the joists over time causing severe rot and decay in the timbers. The method used to secure the original balustrade had also severely compromised many of the structural beams.

An expanded repair scheme was required to ensure the integrity of the terrace structure. A revised repair scheme proposal was subsequently provided by M. Watts, structural engineer.

Although it would still be possible to undertake a more extensive replacement/repair scheme of the defective timber joists than originally proposed, continued timber decay in the future could not be ruled out. Accordingly, a long term solution would be to replace the existing timber decking boards with new composite decking boards and replace the support joists with cold formed galvanised 'C' section mezzanine joists.

The contractor had been asked to produce costs for replacing the terrace decking and load bearing beams with 'like for like' timber as well as in composite and galvanised steel materials. The revised costs included the original requirement for a new balustrade installation compliant with Building Regulations.

Revised Costs:

Option A: Timber construction Labour & Materials £ 66,066.64 + VAT

Option B: Composite and steel Labour & Materials £ 68,907.87 + VAT

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Original quote	Contingency	Budget	Quote Option A	Quote Option B
£35,981.82	£3,598.18	£39,580	£66,066.64	£68,907.87
		Variance to original budget	£26,419.97	£29,327.87

Members were informed that galvanised steel was stronger and more durable than timber and the bespoke structural beams were formed off site, saving on construction labour costs. Moreover, composite decking boards had an estimated life span of 25-30 years, which was generally twice the life span of timber decking boards. A composite and galvanised steel construction would require minimal maintenance and would offer greater longevity.

There were no budget funds currently available to meet the cost variances set out in the above table. Members were therefore requested to consider the following options:

Option 1:

The shortfall was funded from hall funds. Furnace Community Hall statement of accounts for year ending 31 December, 2023 declared a closing balance of £47,049.94.

Option 2:

The works be suspended and the terrace would remain closed until council funds were made available to undertake the repairs. The scheme would be submitted in the 2025-2026 budget considerations.

If the second option was preferred then in all likelihood, the contract would be re-tendered at the appropriate time when funding was identified. Furthermore, if work was suspended the contractor would be required to take all necessary actions to ensure the construction site was left in a safe condition, minimising any further deterioration and securing the site from unauthorised access during the suspension of work.

The contractor would be compensated for all related expenses and work undertaken thus far and also those associated with issues outlined above.

During the ensuing discussion, there was a consensus to suspend all works on the hall balcony until after the UK Government General Election. However, during the interim period between now and the council's next Recreation and Welfare Committee meeting to be held in July 2024, the four local ward members for the Hengoed Ward shall convene a ward meeting to discuss plans to resurrect the hall management committee by calling an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) at the hall. It was hoped by forming a new hall management committee it would support the intended repair work by financially contributing towards the cost of repairs, and it was

RESOLVED that:

1. Option B be pursued as the preferred repair scheme, namely to replace the existing timber decking boards with new composite decking boards and replace the support joints with cold formed galvanised 'C' section mezzanine joints.
2. Work on the hall decking and balustrading be held in abeyance until after the UK Government General Election on 4 July 2024 subject to any further actual and necessary work being performed in the interests of health and safety.

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3. In the interim, local ward members shall convene a meeting to discuss plans for convening an Extraordinary General Meeting of the hall management committee in order to proceed with electing a new committee. The details of the general plans and arrangements for calling this meeting, shall be reported to the next ordinary Recreation and Welfare Committee meeting on 16 July 2024.

During discussion of the above, Cllrs. A. Evans and E. M. Evans left the meeting.

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The Meeting concluded at 5.50 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 9 July, 2024 adopted by the Council.