

MINUTES OF THE TENBY TOWN COUNCIL
MEETING HELD 5TH SEPTEMBER 2023

Present: Cllr Dai Morgan Mayor
Cllr Cllr Sam Skyrme-Blackhall
Cllr Trevor Hallett
Cllr Duncan Whitehurst
Cllr James Phillips
Cllr Laurence Blackhall
Cllr Emma Lewis
Cllr Michelle Evans

In attendance: Mr Andrew Davies Clerk to the Council/Financial Officer
Sharon Thompson Assistant to the Town Clerk

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The Mayor hoped all had had a lovely summer. He welcomed Cllr Evans to her first meeting and wished her well.

80. TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES

Apologies received from Cllrs Sloan, Criddle, Crockford and Dale.

81. TO DISCLOSE ANY PERSONAL ITEMS OF BUSINESS LISTED BELOW

None disclosed.

82. PUBLIC PARTICIATION: AN OPPORTUNITY FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC TO ASK QUESTIONS AND MAKE REPRESENTATIONS ABOUT ANY ITEM OF BUSINESS TO BE TRANSACTED DURING TONIGHTS MEETING AND WHICH IS OPEN FOR PUBLIC DISCUSSION. CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS OF BUSINESS ARE EXCLUDED

a. Katie Daly, PCC would like to talk to the town council about public toilet funding in the town

Katie was joined by her colleague Huw Rowlands

Mayor thanked both for joining the meeting.

Katie explained that she had written a letter back in March but would begin with a quick summary of the position for clarity.

Although it is not a statutory obligation, PCC provide 68 public conveniences across Pembrokeshire. The Authority is undergoing increasing financial strain and they are looking at ways of funding toilets to ease PCC's budget.

One of the avenues they wish to explore is funding support from town and community councils, asset transfers etc.

Cabinet have made a decision that if alternative funding methods are not found then there will be closures across Pembrokeshire.

Funding has been secured for a set number through car parks, community councils or pay to use charges but for Tenby specifically while five have funding, 2 have no funding stream and would be closed if no solution can be found.

These are North Beach and Upper Frog Street which cost roughly £17,500 and £10,000 to operate annually.

Katie acknowledged that it appeared strange that North Beach, which was closed from the end of October to the start of April, cost nearly twice as much as Upper frog Street, which was open all year but these charges are based on the contract with Danfo, which spreads costs on a per cubicle basis.

The conversation she wished to have with TTC was around the importance of these toilets to the town and if there is a desire for them to continue.

If so, was there any option for funding from the council. This could be to continue to manage through Danfo with an invoice from PCC annually or TTC taking over completely and managing the cleaning and maintenance themselves.

Other community councils have done this and found it to be cheaper.

Another option would be that if the town council feel that there would be such an adverse impact to its closure, that they could ask that the toilet be considered as an exception to the policy. Cabinet would make the decision but there would have to be a strong case as to why no funding is available at a local level.

She was happy to support looking at all the options, which could also include closure of either or both. She would rather no closure happened and it is a difficult decision but toilet provision is a non-statutory service being looked at to make cuts.

The timescale was that a commitment of some form would be needed before 5th November. If there was no desire or commitment, Upper Frog Street toilets will close on 5th November permanently (North Beach is closed from 1st November to 1st April in any case, but would not re-open).

If there was a commitment from TCC then Upper Frog Street would be kept open until 1st April. Cases for exception toilets would be considered by Cabinet in December.

She appreciated the timescale was tight but it allowed the town council to factor any potential costs in their budget and precept setting in December.

Cllr Phillips wondered if there was a 'middle way' for example the town council finding alternative management systems but PCC still funding maintenance costs.

Katie felt that this was not possible due to the contract with Danfo. If managed by TTC, all responsibility would fall to TTC.

Cllr Whitehurst, looking back at cabinet meeting, when the toilet strategy was agreed he noted no record of costs versus delivery of the service. There had also been, in his view, little consideration of the needs of the community.

He wondered if PCC have looked at grants which Welsh Government, were providing where toilets need upgrading.

Katie answered that PCC had secured grants to upgrade some toilets, but none were available for ongoing revenue costs for toilets.

Cllr Whitehurst noted that as a temporary measure, approved by PCC, was for funding from second homes being used to keep toilets open while their consultations took place. Had the option to continue this been considered as there was benefit to locals and visitors alike? He felt it was worth exploring before closing toilets as he doesn't feel all options have been explored.

One of the largest and most serious concerns expressed during PCC's consultation was potential loss of toilets. People feel it is not the best approach as they feel they already pay for this through council tax. The expectation as a tax payer is why do toilets have to pay for themselves or face closure, they should be there, free to use, when people need them.

Cllr Lewis agreed. She felt public perception was that all monies seemed to be going to Haverfordwest and Tenby's importance as one of the county's main tourism centres was being overlooked. Many visitors to Tenby can't afford to keep paying to use the toilet every time they need to during the day.

Had PCC considered who was going to pay for the clean-up if people just went to the toilet where they wanted?

In relation to costs asked Cllr Blackhall, if a toilet cost £20,000 to run and there is a paying system what happens to surplus funds? Would these surplus funds go into the toilet budget for that particular area?

Katie said that a proportion goes into a reinvestment pot while the rest would go into the overall toilet budget.

Cllr Blackhall wondered, for example, if Castle Beach generated enough to cover North Beach, would there be an option to asset transfer all the toilets to TTC. Katie replied that only 2 charged for toilets in Tenby generate a small surplus, these being Castle Beach and the Multi-storey. The Green, South Beach

and Butts Field were topped up by the car parking budget, as these were in car parks.

She did not feel that surplus income generated by the Castle Beach and Multi-storey would be sufficient to make any sizeable difference to funding the North Beach or Upper Frog Street.

We are only covering costs, she commented. Paid for toilets are not 'cash cows', they don't generate huge amounts of money and are only just cost neutral in most cases.

Cllr. Blackhall felt if we were looking at an exception toilet then North Beach was the strongest case.

We have world class sporting events with international coverage. How would it be if the main beach used for these events had no toilets in sight, he asked?

Regarding the Market toilets, there were separate discussions on the market itself being had with PCC.

It may be the case that this becomes an asset transfer in its own right and the toilets could be redeveloped.

He felt we were in a situation where we were over a barrel and could be a town with no public toilet within the town walls.

If pushed, Cllr. Blackhall said he would consider TTC funding the market toilets if it was possible to achieve an accommodation for North Beach. He felt it would be too significant a hit for TTC to be taking on 2 toilets in one financial year.

Cllr. Skyrme-Blackhall said that she, as a County Councillor, and the Town Clerk had visited all the public toilets in the town with Katie last year and now had a better understanding of where funding goes.

However, it was still her bugbear that while we are the jewel in the crown of the county, PCC don't get the amount of footfall in this town year round, not just in peak season.

She said it was difficult for her to see the amount of funds generated in Tenby for the county with little being reinvested in supporting our residents and our main industry, which is tourism.

She was sad but a choice has to be made. However, we have to look after our town and those who use our facilities. She could possibly support TTC taking over the market maintenance if North Beach was considered an exception and still funded by PCC.

Cllr. Phillips felt the problem is we were being asked to make a decision without the full financial information as to what running costs were to see if TTC could achieve savings if we took them over.

He felt we needed more time to find the best solution. And wondered if there could be a stay of execution on the 5th November deadline.

Katie said that sadly this was not possible, but if she could show Cabinet that she and TTC were actively discussing potential solutions then Upper Frog Street would stay open to 31st March.

Cllr. Blackhall felt that we could move quite quickly if TTC could have information for North Beach and Upper Frog Street in relation to how many times a day cleaned, opening hours, staff, water consumption and cost of consumables. We could call a meeting of the policy committee and discuss our options.

Katie said she could provide these.

Cllr Evans asked if there would be a possibility of charging for the facilities?

Katie said that as only two charged facilities in the town covered their costs, Danfo felt it would not be worthwhile installing payment facilities in North Beach or Upper Frog Street as it would be unlikely it would pay for itself.

Cllr. Blackhall proposed that the Policy and Finance Committee have a discussion and return to Council with a proposal.

The Clerk cautioned members that, if we took over the toilets to manage ourselves, we would have to have a robust system in place. He recalled just maintaining the toilet block on South Parade for a short period as being an awful experience as office staff had to go and clean the toilets on weekends a number of times when the contracted staff did not turn up due to illness.

Cllr Phillips wondered about making the toilets at the De Valence for public use but it was felt that this was a discussion that would need to be had with the DVP.

RESOLVED

That a meeting of the policy and finance committee be called with future toilet funding as an agenda item.

83. TO AGREE ITEMS OF CORRESPONDENCE AND COMMITTEE MINUTES, EXCEPT THOSE MARKED PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL, BE GIVEN TO THE MEMBERS OF THE PRESS PRESENT

Proposed Cllr Hallett, seconded by Cllr Lewis.

84. TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD 4TH JULY 2023

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the Tenby Town Council meeting held 4th July 2023 be confirmed and signed as accurate.

85. TO CONSIDER ANY MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES FOR INFORMATION ONLY

Page 46 Item 66 - Dog Warden: The Clerk had received no response from Saundersfoot. The pilot project has started with PCC but the officers had not been in post very long. Cllr Phillips suggested asking for data once the scheme had bedded in a bit more.

86. TO CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING ITEMS OF CORRESPONDENCE AND AGREE ACTION IN RESPONSE TO PROPOSALS:

a. Rose Howard, PCC – Allotment sites

Members felt this was an interesting proposal but had difficulty understanding when the actual arrangement would be and if there would be any costs to the town council in the future. Cllr. Phillips wondered if an Allotment Association could be formed to run the site. Cllr. Blackhall said he was all in favour of local services being delivered at a more local level but he needed more of an understanding as to what the proposal was. Perhaps the allotment holders themselves needed to be engaged to ascertain their views on the proposal.

It was agreed to ask for a site meeting with Miss Howard where the idea could be discussed in more detail.

87. TO RECEIVE THE ACCOUNTS FOR JULY AND AUGUST (INCLUDING SCHEDULED PAYMENTS, UNPRESENTED CHEQUES, RECEIPTS, ACCOUNT BALANCES, BUDGET MONITORING TO DATE AND BANK RECONCILIATIONS) AND CONSIDER ANY ISSUES ARISING (ON THE TABLE)

Cllr Blackhall suggested that perhaps we review where our monies were held. Interest rates have gone up and perhaps we could look into getting some advice on investments.

Cllr. Skyrme-Blackhall referred to the New Cemetery account. The sub-committee had not visited the cemetery for a year. It was agreed that a site visit be arranged.

Cllr Lewis noted the payment to Ironman. She understands that many make money but it is quite disruptive for other businesses. Our contribution is a lot of money considering where we spend other finances.

Cllr. Blackhall pointed out that we were committed to this level of funding until the next negotiation over whether or not the contract is renewed.

He was aware that Tenby is the only town or community council that puts money in the pot but he was of the opinion that it was a relatively small amount given at the time the last contract was negotiated as a good will gesture.

He took on board that there is disruption. But looking at the event it brings in millions of pounds to the Pembrokeshire economy.

It allows us to show off the town and county at its best and brings people down. Athletes themselves have admitted to coming to Tenby sometimes 4 times a year to train on the course. It also extends the season.

There has also been an impact locally. We have cycling clubs, triathlon clubs and swimming clubs locally that were just not there before Ironman and Long Course Weekend.

Cllr. Blackhall ventured that these events had done more for local public health, particularly men's health, than any public health intervention by Hywel Dda University Health Board.

Cllr Skyrme-Blackhall echoed Cllr Blackhall. She thoroughly enjoys and supports the event. Granted there were issues with the date this year, but we have been promised that this can never happen again. Next year it will be 22nd September.

Those who say their business is negatively impacted on the day need to look before and after the event, she continued. Speaking to athletes they say that there is no place like it and that is why they come down time and time again. She felt, personally, that the positives outweigh the negatives.

We have the best atmosphere and it's where the athletes want to be said Cllr. Blackhall.

He added that Cardiff had been actively lobbying to take Ironman from us some years ago and our funding was a token gesture of goodwill to ensure it remained in Tenby.

Of course, we have now proven our commitment so perhaps we don't need to continue our financial support during the next negotiation, he said.

It was suggested that perhaps Ironman could consider putting something back into the town for example by sponsoring the North Beach toilets given the iconic importance of the swim start off the beach.

Cllr. Phillips and Cllr. Lewis noted that there appeared to be an underfunding of £75,000 in projected Precept income. The Clerk explained that precept income is received in three tranches, April, August and December. The accounts only reflected the precept income received to date.

The Clerk referred members to the report on the Belgian Commemoration later in the agenda. When the event had been first mooted it had been envisaged as a smaller scale affair and we had budgeted accordingly.

However, with the attendance of the Lord Lieutenant of Dyfed and senior Civic and Military dignitaries, he was concerned that costs would exceed the agreed budget.

He pointed out that there was an underspend in the budget allocated for the Coronation and sought permission to vire funds from this budget to the Belgian event budget if required. Cllr Hallett supported the proposal and Cllr Skyrme-Blackhall seconded.

Cllr. Blackhall added that there was also some capacity in reserves if this funding virement was insufficient.

Cllr Skyrme-Blackhall proposed accepting accounts and Cllr Blackhall seconded.

RESOLVED

That the accounts for July and August (including scheduled payments, un-presented cheques, receipts, account balances, budget monitoring to date and bank reconciliations) be approved.

It was further

RESOLVED

That funding be vired from the Coronation Event budget to the Belgian Event budget if necessary.

88. TO RECEIVE ANY UPDATES FROM COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

Cllr. Whitehurst reported that the meeting of SEPCHN in Saundersfoot had been a big success. A more detailed report will be presented to the next meeting. The next meeting of SEPCHN would be in early October. It was all looking very positive; people can come and air their concerns and get good feedback.

He was also planning a meeting with Welsh Water, NRW and PCC to go through the season's water testing report.

Cllr Lewis reminded councillors of the Tenby Free Fun Day, Saturday 23rd September in Battery Gardens and on South Beach Car Park. All welcome.

Cllr Skyrme-Blackhall had attended the health meeting and recommended councillors go to one if they could as it was very informative.

Cllr Skyrme-Blackhall gave out medals to Iron Kids. It was very hot and they all did exceptionally well. There was a great atmosphere. She thanked the Mayor for the honour to do it.

Since the last meeting the Mayor had attended the annual Rotary Club of Tenby dinner. He learned that they do a lot to support the deaf and blind. Unfortunately, they have a similar story to Tenby Lions in that they are struggling to recruit. They are concerned

they may not continue so if anyone is interested, please contact them at it would be a shame for either club to close.

He had attended the Firemen's carnival. It was great to see local businesses and the community all coming together.

He had also attended the Round Table Summer Spectacular. The first had been rained off but the second raised £10,000 for charity which was outstanding.

To round off a busy summer, he had attended Ironman. He had been there for the first swimmer in the water and the last runner home. Everyone would be aware of his views on how outstanding this event had been.

He had been honoured to attend these events and see people round town doing marvellous things

89. TO CONSIDER ANY FINANCIAL OFFICER/CLERK'S ITEMS AND TO AGREE ACTION IN RESPONSE TO PROPOSALS:

a. A Brief Guide to Planning

The Clerk had been asked to prepare this at last meeting. He hoped the document would assist members in understanding planning and some of the terms used. He also flagged up the new 'change of use categories' introduced by Welsh Government this year. PCNPA were also proposing to hold planning workshops later in year.

Cllr. Whitehurst thanked the Clerk, adding that the information on Section 106 was very useful.

b. Update on the Belgian Forces in Tenby Commemoration events 22nd-24th September

The Clerk presented an update and expressed his gratitude to Cllr Phillips for getting on board and assisting in the organising. He hopes all members of council who can do so will attend the events planned.

Road closures for the parade are in place and notices will be going out next week.

The Mayor suggested a visit to the local schools to talk to children about the event. The Clerk felt this would be excellent as Col Le Hardy had received little feedback when he contacted them.

However, the office had received a recent visit from the school caterers suggesting they put on a Belgian Menu meal for the Friday. This was being looked into.

Cllr. Phillips offered to go to the schools with the Mayor and suggested that perhaps a representative from the Museum join them.

The Clerk agreed to contact the schools and the museum to see if a visit could be arranged. The Mayor suggested 19th September,

Belgian flags and bunting had been supplied by the Belgian Government. It was just a question of getting them our around the harbour, church, museum and war memorial by the weekend. The Community Engagement Officer said she would ask shopkeepers to dress their windows.

The Clerk referred members to the suggestion in the document that the Mayor host a small reception for veterans and their families. This would be something just for them.

Cllr Phillips proposed the we host a small reception on the Friday evening. The Mayor seconded.

Cllr Lewis asked if there were any veterans who are alive who are unable to travel and suggested a package be provided to be brought home to them. This would be looked into.

c. Council photocopier

The office photocopier was no longer working and could not be repaired. The Clerk had obtained quotes for a new leasing agreement. The quotes were very similar.

Therefore, in accordance with financial regulations, and due to the urgency, the Clerk and Mayor had made the decision to order a new machine for delivery at the end of the week.

Cllr Hallett thanked the Clerk and the Mayor for sorting matters out.

d. Provisional diary date – 6 pm, Tuesday 10th October PCC update on Brynhir development

PCC had requested that they meet with the Town Council via Teams on 10th October at 6 pm to provide an update on Brynhir. Please could members keep the date free in their diaries if possible.

90. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Resolved that the next planning meeting will take place on Tuesday, 3rd October 2023 at 7pm followed by a full council meeting on Tuesday, 3rd October 2023 at 7.30pm.

91. TO PROPOSE ANY ITEM FOR THE NEXT AGENDA

Conversation with NRW regarding the addition of Merlins Gardens being added to the high-risk flood area – Cllr Whitehurst.

Update on De Valence – Cllr Phillips.

92. TO RESOLVE TO EXCLUDE THE PUBLIC FROM THE MEETING DURING CONSIDERATION OF THE FOLLOWING ITEM(S) OF BUSINESS UNDER THE “PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSION TO MEETINGS) ACT OF 1960