

HOLYWELL TOWN COUNCIL

CYNGOR TREF TREFFYNNON

Minutes of the Meeting of the Finance Committee held in the Council Chamber, Bank Place Offices, Holywell on Thursday, 26 January 2017 at 6.30pm.

PRESENT: Councillor B. Scragg (Chairman).

Councillors: P.J. Curtis, Mrs. R. Dolphin, D.W. Jones, J.M. Johnson (Mayor), E.B. Palmer, Mrs. M.D. Phelan, H.G. Roberts and P.A. York.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE were received from Councillors Mrs. M. Auty, Mrs. K. Davies, J. Griffiths, P.J. McGarry, K. Roberts, L. Thorley, Mrs. S.E. Wallbanks and E. Watkinson.

IN ATTENDANCE: D.C. Pierce (Clerk).

F6. DECLARATION OF INTEREST – MEMBERS’ CODE OF CONDUCT

The following Declaration of Interest was made and the relevant form completed for the Clerk to action under the statutory requirements.

Minute No.	Name of Councillor	Personal	Prejudicial	Nature of Interest
F9.	Mrs. R. Dolphin	√	-	Member of Carmel Bowling Club

F7. HSBC BANK, HOLYWELL – PLANNED CLOSURE FRIDAY, 19 MAY 2017

This item although not on the agenda had been accepted by the Chairman in order to update Members on the worrying announcement earlier in the week by HSBC that the Holywell branch would be closing in May. A copy of the Bank’s letter to Ward Councillor P.J. Curtis, explaining that the decision to close the branch, along with sixty-one of its other UK branches, was in response to a significant change in the way customers were banking, HSBC’s continued investment in digital banking and the Bank’s objective to achieve a sustainable branch network in the long-term.

Members expressed dismay and disappointment at the decision which came weeks after the announcement that NatWest would also be closing its Holywell branch and two months after Barclays Bank, also on Holywell High Street, had closed its doors to the public. Despite assurances from HSBC, who were also the Council’s bankers, that every assistance would be offered to their customers with the transition (all accounts held at the branch would automatically be transferred to Mold), Members felt that the people of Holywell had again been let down and that the importance of how much the

community relied on local branches had not been fully appreciated by the decision-takers.

According to HSBC, they had a partnership with the Post Office so clients could continue to carry out their day to day banking.

The Clerk reported that a meeting between the appointed Town Council representatives and senior management at NatWest would take place on 8 February. Likewise, the Rt. Hon. David Hanson MP had arranged a meeting with the Area Director of HSBC on 17 February, at which the Council was invited to be represented. He added that David Hanson and Delyn AM, Hannah Blythyn would be in Holywell High Street (supported by local Councillors) the following morning collecting signatures to save Holywell Bank branches.

Members felt that the town needed at least one bank and that every avenue should be explored to retain these facilities.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Council share with the press its stance opposing the bank closures and demanding a reversal of the decisions or significant concessions.
- (2) That the Mayor and/or Deputy Mayor, together with Councillor E.B. Palmer be also authorised to attend the joint meeting with HSBC on 17 February.
- (3) That the Council considers in due course its future banking arrangements with HSBC.

F8. PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSION TO MEETINGS) ACT 1960 – EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED:

That the public and press be excluded for the following minute F9. on grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted arising from the supporting financial and other information provided with the applications.

F9. APPLICATIONS FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE – 2016/17

Members considered requests received for financial assistance from various organisations in conjunction with a schedule of the organisations and events supported by the Council in 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/16. The Clerk read out supporting background and financial information provided by each organisation.

A statement of donations made to date in the current (2016/17) financial year was also provided with details of budget provision (£5,000), available balance (£2,750) and the Council's policy on donations.

As requested by the Council, Members also:

- (i) considered adding a nominal sum to the Mayor's annual allowance for use at his/her discretion for individual/group event donations that may be sought during the annual term of office for non-commercial activity benefitting the community and falling outside the Council's policy requirements for general applications.
- (ii) reviewed the requirements to support general applications for financial assistance. Currently, these comprised an adopted Constitution or set of Rules; the latest year's audited accounts or statement of income and expenditure; and a copy of the latest Bank/Building Society statement(s) for all accounts held by the organisation.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the following donations be made:-

	£
Carmel Bowling Club	200
Holywell Band	500
	<hr/>
	700

- (2) That donations of £1,000 from the current earmarked budget provisions be made to Citizens Advice Flintshire and to Holywell Walkers are Welcome.
- (3) That a decision on the application from Greenfield Bowling Club be deferred pending clarification from the County Council regarding the proposed transfer of this asset to the club and what, if any, financial or other support is intended to be provided to the Club by the County Council to facilitate a community asset transfer.
- (4) That the Mayor's Allowance for 2017/18 be increased by a sum of £500 for donations to be made in the circumstances outlined in (i) above.
- (5) That no change be made at the present time to the requirements to support general applications to the Council for financial assistance.

F10. BANK RECONCILIATION

Bank Reconciliation Statements for the Council's HSBC Current, Management and Moneymarket Bond Accounts were circulated. The Clerk summarised the entries. There were no questions raised by Members.

RESOLVED:

That the Bank Reconciliation Statements, as presented, be received and noted.

F11. ANNUAL ESTIMATES OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

Members considered lists detailing the estimates, probable income and expenditure for 2016/17 and estimated figures for 2017/18 together with the Clerk's accompanying report. The Clerk identified and explained certain items for Members' information and also answered questions.

The following in particular were noted:-

Current financial year – the contract for ground floor public meeting facilities and associated works as part of the Council's accommodation at 14 Bank Place, planned for the 2015/16 financial year, to improve access, had extended into the current financial year. Unforeseen essential safety works to the chimney stacks at 12/13 Bank Place followed. Additional expenditure was required to stage the Well Inn Music Festival. The event proved a huge success despite bad weather on the day. The five weeks Summer Playscheme Programme was maintained and funding was agreed for another play area upgrade. The town's festive lights had again been improved with additions in Tower Gardens together with an electricity connection and a metallic fence enclosure for the on-site Christmas tree. Unfortunately, it had not been possible to date to recruit for a part-time staff member although the process was to be started in the next few weeks.

A member commended the enhancement and improvement project that that recently been carried out by Groundwork North Wales at the Council-owned Woodland off Halkyn Road, Holywell under the Tesco Community Grant Scheme. The Clerk added that the Council would also be arranging additional maintenance work to be undertaken before the end of March.

New financial year – in recent weeks the County Council's support on a number of levels had been further reduced as part of its ongoing austerity measures following the impact of decreasing Welsh Government funding for that Authority. This needed to be taken into account when setting the precept to ensure that as far as possible and practicable existing arrangements were not unduly affected. The Council organised Community Engagement meetings were becoming more of a feature and proposals were included to enable wider

communication of and encouragement to attend future meetings, the next being proposed after May's local Council elections and before the Summer recess period, if possible.

The situation in respect of the Holywell Leisure Centre and the financial contribution(s) sought from the Town Council in support, which were significant in relation to the Council's budget and its precept-setting was highlighted. Additionally, the proposal originally submitted by the Carmel & Holywell Woodcraft Association, was presented for a hand-crafted chair for the Mayor/Chairperson in the Council Chamber in its new setting.

As in previous years, the draft budget for 2017/18 has been prepared reflecting changes in expenditure levels since April of last year and to use available funds in other budget heads, where appropriate, to emphasise the Council's ongoing support to develop its 'events base'. Grant funding was also being sought to arrange feasibility studies in connection with other items in the Council's expressed regeneration/tourism priorities (eg. roof covering over Tower Gardens and electric car charging points in public car parks). Partnership/match funding schemes had so far been continued by the County Council. This had enabled play area upgrading works over many years to date. For example, in the last five years the following sites had benefitted:

2011/12	Clwyd Avenue
2012/13	Groesffordd
2013/14	Penrhyn
2014/15	Strand Walk
2015/16	Pen y Maes Gardens
2016/17	Play area to be determined

By reference to the Clerk's written report and supporting correspondence copied with the agenda/circulated at the meeting, Members' attention was drawn to the following matters requiring confirmation or consideration and decision.

- Match Funding Play Area Upgrade (play area to be determined).
- Community Transport Funding: WBCT
- Flintshire Against Business Crime (FABC – radio link scheme)
- Community Engagement Meetings
- Events
- Mayor's/Chairman's Chair
- Support Staff: Bank Place Offices
p/t 20 hours per week
- Contribution to Holywell Leisure Centre/Agreement verification
- Reserve (Holywell Town Council – Community Asset Transfer Scheme)

A written request from Councillor Mrs. M. Auty for the allocation of a sum of £1,000 from within the Reserve in respect of the Community Garden, Greenfield.

The Clerk reported two additional matters as follows:

(i) Community Asset Transfers: Public Toilets and Holywell Leisure Centre Group - Financial arrangements

The following suggested wording had been received from the County Council which tried to capture what had been discussed at the recent joint informal meeting between County Members/officers and Town Council representatives, and which tried to capture what had been discussed while not putting either party in a position that could not be delivered.

- “Flintshire County Council recognises the genuine pressure that will be faced by Holywell Town Council if both the full costs of the asset transfers of the public toilets and the leisure centre are met by the town council in 2017.
- Therefore Flintshire County Council commits to work co-operatively with the town council to address this issue.
- The County Council will support the town council to try and find an asset transfer solution to the public toilets during 2017/18.
- That this solution will aim to minimise costs for all parties.
- That while we would aim for an October 1st completion date we recognise if an outline solution has been agreed by all parties then we will be flexible about the implementation date.
- That the timing of the transfer will be planned to ensure all parties are able to manage their budgets.
- That through this co-operative approach to the public toilets, it enables the town council to provide the full £20k revenue funding being asked for by the community group for the first year of operation of the leisure centre in addition to the seed corn funding already being provided.”

Members, however, had a clear understanding following the presentation and clarification by Tudor Jones on behalf of the Holywell Leisure Centre Group and the subsequent discussion at the Council meeting held on 15 November 2016 that the Town Council’s contribution if agreed related to an inclusive sum of £20k.

(ii) Non-domestic (Business) Rates – Proposed increase in Rateable Value – Bank Place Offices

Reference was made to the review of the rateable value for the Council’s Bank Place Offices and to the proposed increase

from £11,000 to £19,250. If implemented in the 2017/18 financial year, this would mean an additional £3,740 payable in non-domestic rates.

The Clerk added that he had been in contact with the Valuation Office Agency and was awaiting contact to arrange an appointment for a site meeting to discuss the position including the basis for the proposed significant increase in rateable value.

The Committee also had before it, examples of the effect on Holywell community's Band D properties Council Tax of increasing the precept in various increments over and above its precept sum for 2016/17 (£176,870), together with precepts and charges in the individual communities across the County in the current financial year. As a general guide, every £1,000 increase in precept would roughly mean an additional 31p in Council Tax per Band D charge.

RESOLVED:

(A) BUDGET 2017/18

- (1) That the Annual Estimates of Income and Expenditure, as presented, be approved subject to the additional £500 sum approved in minute F7. (2) and the following resolutions:-
- (2) That £10,000 be allocated to a Leisure Services fund towards a contribution in respect of play area improvements within the Holywell community under a partnership/match funding scheme with the County Council; with the play area at the Holway being upgraded from the funding made available in 2016/17.
- (3) That, in view of its financial support to the Estuary Voluntary Car Scheme, the Council does not make a contribution to Welsh Border Community Transport in response to its request for 2017/18.
- (4) That £1,000 be earmarked towards the FABC Holywell/Greenfield scheme subject to system coverage and support issues being resolved to the Council's satisfaction.
- (5) That the following amounts be included to support the continuation of Community Engagement (public) meetings (3no.)

Circulation of notices etc to the public	£1,000
Hire of meeting venues	£200

Simultaneous Translation at meetings £345

- (6) That the following amounts be added to support the Council's events programme:

Annual Welsh Day (St. David's)	£1,500
Northern Soul	£1,500
External support costs – general	£500
First Aid/Ambulance support	£600
Artisans Shop, High Street – central storage facility	£600

- (7) That a sum of £1,500 be allocated towards the provision by the Carmel & Holywell Woodcraft Association of a hand-crafted chair for the Mayor/Chairman at meetings in the Council Chamber.
- (8) That arrangements for recruiting support staff at Bank Place Offices be actioned within an allocated budget sum of £9,815 initially (p/t up to 20 hrs per week).
- (9) That the additional reports by the Clerk in minute F11. (i) and (ii) be noted and the suggested wording by the County Council generally accepted subject to further discussions, except for the view about the level of financial support required from the Town Council.
- (10) That the Council agree to make a further contribution to the Holywell Leisure Centre Group of £17k (in addition to the £3k already approved) with £350 for Agreement verification/legal advice.
- (11) That an earmarked reserve of £5,000 be maintained in respect of the Town Council's possible involvement in the Community Asset Transfer Scheme, without individual allocations within this sum for any asset for which a no commitment 'expression of interest' has been made.

(Note: Councillors P.J. Curtis and Mrs M.D. Phelan abstained from voting on the Holway play area upgrade part of resolution (2) above.

(B) PRECEPT 2017/18

That a precept of £210,870 be issued on Flintshire County Council for the financial year 2017/18 (an increase of 20p per week on 2016/17).

F12. FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

Consideration was given to reviewing/approving the Council's Financial Regulations.

RESOLVED:

That the Financial Regulations, as presented, be approved without change.

F13. AUDIT OF ACCOUNTS AND ANNUAL RETURN – YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2017

RESOLVED:

That the following appointments in respect of the financial year 2016/17 be noted/approved, subject to any changes that may be notified by the Wales Audit Office:

External (Statutory Auditor) – BDO LLP
(Southampton) on behalf of the Auditor General for Wales.

Internal Auditor – JDH Business Services Ltd,
Pantymwyn, Flintshire.

F14. CLOSE OF MEETING

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.15pm.

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Chairman