

MINUTES OF A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BAY OF COLWYN TOWN COUNCIL, HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWN HALL, RHIW ROAD, COLWYN BAY, ON MONDAY 25TH NOVEMBER AT 6:30 P.M.

PRESENT: The Mayor, Cllr N Bastow
Cllrs: G Baker; B Barton; C Brockley; H Fleet; D Howcroft;
C Hughes; D Jones; M A Jones; Mrs M Jones; A Khan;
J Pearson; P Richards; K Swindon; M Tasker; S Williams; M Worth

OFFICER: Mrs C Earley, Town Clerk
Miss L Austin, Administrative Assistant (Observer)

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr M Tidswell, CCBC

261/19 Welcome and Apologies for Absence:

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologies for absence were received from Cllrs: D Bradley, C Matthews and M Pickard.

262/19 Declarations of Interest:

Members are reminded that they must declare the existence and nature of any personal and/or prejudicial interests. None were declared.

263/19 Delivering Sustainable Services in Conwy's Communities:

The Clerk submitted a detailed report, to include a letter from Jane Richardson, Strategic Director (Economy and Place), CCBC, which identifies a number of community-based services that are likely to be 'at-risk' in 2020/21, due to CCBC's ongoing budgetary pressures and the need for 'significant cuts to services'. The Clerk also tabled a follow-up e-mail from Jane Richardson confirming that a town/community council would be responsible for arranging appropriate insurance in respect of any assets transferred to it. The letter includes a table showing the current cost to CCBC of providing each of these services and town and community councils are being asked to consider how we might be able to support any services that are of particular importance and value to the local community.

It was agreed to take the Rhos Paddling Pool first and to invite Mr M Tidswell to address the Council, as the Officer now responsible for the service (since earlier this year). Mally confirmed that he was here to seek financial support towards the running costs of the Rhos-on-Sea paddling pool. Members were referred to the budget breakdown, included in Appendix E of the Clerk's report, showing an annual net running cost of £6,703, after deducting income of £151. He then invited questions from members.

Comments and questions were raised about: the high percentage of visitors from outside of the area that use the pool (which should therefore be considered as a tourism asset); whether there were still plans to upgrade the paddling pool and public conveniences and include a small charge to off-set running costs (MT responded that he was not aware of the full history of the site, but will check with Rob Dix /



Marianne Jackson about the feasibility of an upgrade project); concerns about playgrounds serving tourism spots being classed as 'low priority' by the Play Areas task & Finish Group, given the importance of tourism to the local economy (a view MT shares); a request for further information on the repairs and maintenance costs (mostly relate to start of season repairs/preparation); whether these costs include a % for CCBC management/ overheads (no); whether the £151 is the only income received from summer concessions, or if that goes to a different budget - MT was asked to check why this is so low, when one member recalls it being around £2,000 a few years ago (MT confirmed it is his role to review any historical agreements and look at more commercial opportunities to increase income); it was commented that the toilets near the pool are in a very poor condition.

Mally Tidswell was then thanked for attending and he retired from the meeting.

Members were then asked to consider each of the identified 'at-risk' services in turn and decide on their preferred course of action, to inform the budget setting process for 2020/21.

1) General Comments:

Members commented on the insurance implications if the town council chose to pursue the option of a transfer of assets from CCBC. It was noted that CCBC does not bother to insure individual items of relatively low value, such as play equipment, as the risk is low when shared across the whole of its 152 sites. However, a town or community council with a much smaller budget and less reserves may feel it necessary to insure such assets. The Clerk also referred members to the information and advice supplied by Zurich in relation to the risks associated with outdoor / community facilities such as play areas, public conveniences and paddling pools. It was generally agreed that the capacity issues and additional risks the transfer of assets would cause mean that it would not be viable, or in the best interests of local taxpayers, for this council to offer to take on such assets.

2) Playgrounds:

The Chairman referred members to section 2 of the Clerk's report, which summarizes the current position. Members were informed that the longer term sustainability of play areas is being considered by a CCBC Task & Finish Group, but that there is still a short-term need for capital funding to repair/replace existing equipment. The average annual capital requirement to repair/replace equipment in the 19 Bay of Colwyn area playgrounds is estimated at £121,513 and this council, in recent years, has provided £17,500 per annum towards these costs. The current year budget of £47,500 (allocated over a 2 year period) has not yet been spent, due to delays by CCBC in awaiting the outcome of the Task & Finish Group's recommendations on prioritization of the CCBC budget, which needs to be allocated first.

A debate ensued about flaws in the current tax system, with many members expressing concern about local government having to make up for cuts in income tax by increasing local taxes, so that basic services can be maintained.



Members strongly agreed that services should only be transferred to our tier of local government if it could be clearly demonstrated that it was in the best interests of local taxpayers. This would only be the case if an equal or better service could be provided at a reduced cost and should not be considered purely to get around the financial pressures being felt by the County Council due to austerity measures and capping of precept increases.

Concern was also expressed about how we can ensure equality across the county when it comes to these local services, if each town and community council responds differently to the request for assistance. There could also be an unfair disadvantage to poorer communities with lower tax bases, who would have higher precept increases to provide the same amount of funding as more affluent areas.

Resolved to support option 2.2.1:

To keep to the current annual contribution of £17,500 and consider anything over and above this on a case-by-case basis (from reserves), accepting that pieces of equipment may have to be fenced off or removed if funding is not available.

Further resolved to request that the Clerk shares this Council's concerns with other town councils in Conwy and finds out how they are responding to the requests.

3) Theatr Colwyn

Members were then asked to consider continuing the annual financial support for Theatr Colwyn (currently £55,000 per annum). It was noted that over 90% of those attending the Theatre are from within a 5 mile radius and that the funding from this council ensures there is a varied and affordable annual programme.

Resolved to support option 3.2.1:

To continue with the current level of annual funding support (£55,000).

4) Oriel Colwyn

It was noted that the gallery no longer receives an annual grant from the Arts Council for Wales and that an annual contribution of £10,000 towards the total running costs of the gallery (of £41,500) is being requested.

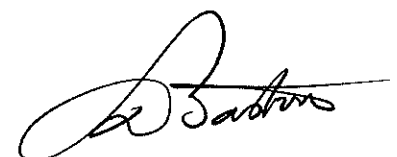
Though sympathetic to the request, Members felt that they could not commit this amount at this stage, given that this is just the beginning of an ongoing dialogue with CCBC about other 'at risk' services, with a potential total 'ask' of around £171,000 (see table in 13.1 of the Clerk's report).

Resolved, reluctantly, to support option 4.2.2:

To decline the request for funding support, at this stage.

5) Theatr Colwyn Projects

Members considered the request for an annual budget of £5,000 to support new projects/events. It was noted that these have previously been considered by the



Town Council on an annual basis from its 'Events Grants' budget.

Resolved to support option 5.2.2:

To consider additional requests for projects such as this on a year-by-year basis, by way of either events or large grants applications.

6) Rhos Paddling Pool

Members expressed disappointment that the current proposal ignores the potential of this site to attract a greater level of income. The facility is now in a poor condition and requires substantial investment.

Resolved to invite Rob Dix (and Mally) to attend a future meeting to re-open a dialogue about improvements to the facility, which would help to reduce future running costs (invest to save).

7) Major Event Delivery

A brief discussion took place around the funding support for a few core annual events. However, there was a reluctance to increase this core funding, due to other pressures at the current time.

Resolved to support option 7.2.2:

To continue to support several key annual events (Prom Xtra £10,000, Eirias Concerts (£20,000) and Wales GB Rally (£15,000), but consider any additional event on its own merits, on an application basis (via the existing Events Grant budget).

8) Car Parks

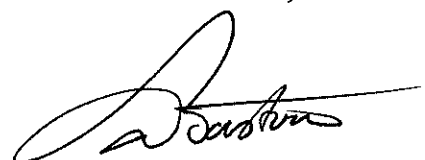
It was noted that there are only three remaining free public car parks across the County and that CCBC intends to install pay and display in these, unless the respective town/community council wishes to lease it to continue to provide free parking. The annual cost to this council to retain Berthes Road car park as a free car park would be £22,600 (based on 70% of the expected annual income of £29,000).

Resolved to support option 8.2.2:

To decline the offer of a lease, but encourage CCBC to engage with the local residents and primary school if it intends to introduce charges and to make permits available to those who need them (to include free short-stay permits at set times for school drop-off and pick up).

9) Public Conveniences

It was noted that there was only limited information available at the recent surgery sessions and no evidence presented to back up the claims that the public conveniences could be delivered better/cheaper by the town and community councils. This view appeared to be based solely on the principle that the local council could employ cheaper labour for cleaning/maintenance etc. However, if



the town council were to use a contractor to do this work, there would be additional costs incurred in monitoring the work of the contractor, taking out additional insurance and ensuring compliance with risk assessments etc.

It was noted that a number of supplementary questions had been submitted to the Head of Service following the surgery, but no response has been received, as yet. It was not clear how the figures in the 'financial ask' column had been calculated.

Members agreed that the open toilet scheme should be in addition to, and not in replacement of, public toilets, as many of these do not have the same facilities for disabled people as the public conveniences have.

Concern was expressed about a lack of communication between two CCBC departments (ERF and CDS), which had resulted in the recent closure of the Porth Eirias facilities to the general public. The public toilets opposite Porth Eirias (Dingle) had not been refurbished and were earmarked for demolition at the time of the waterfront project. They are, therefore, very poor and would require significant upgrading to bring them up to the standard required for a heavily-used tourism hot-spot. Local members had not been consulted prior to the granting of an amendment to the lease, which had enabled the proprietor to close the Porth Eirias toilets and changing rooms to the public.

As previously highlighted, the Rhos Paddling Pool public conveniences are also in a very poor condition and require significant investment. Both of these have the potential to provide significant income generation, particularly in the summer months, to help off-set their costs.

Concern was also expressed about risks in taking on the Ivy Street facility, which suffers from complaints about anti-social behavior and other drug-related issues.

***Resolved to support option 9.11.2:
To decline any financial support at the present time.***

10) CCTV Monitoring

Members expressed disappointment that the risk of the ongoing revenue funding not being available had not been highlighted when the town council was approached for financial support for the upgrading of the cameras and control room to digital just two/three years ago (and which this council had contributed £30,000 towards).

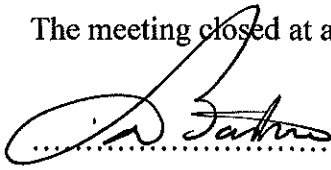
It was suggested that, given the emerging/new technologies, it may be possible in the future for remote or on-demand monitoring to take place, thus reducing the ongoing costs of fully staffing the control room. There is also the potential to reduce monitoring at quieter times of the day or night.

***Resolved to support option 10.8.2:
To continue to contribute towards the maintenance costs only and request further discussions prior to any reduction in monitoring (e.g. around reduced hours of operation, greater support from NW Police and/or and remote monitoring).***



Further resolved to request compensation should the monitoring service be withdrawn or reduced without further discussion with /agreement of the Town Council.

The meeting closed at approx. 8:00 pm

..... Chairman