

Minutes of the Meeting of COUNCIL
held at Neuadd Cyngor Ceredigion, Penmorfa, Aberaeron and remotely via video
conference on Tuesday, 23rd January, 2024

PRESENT: Councillor Maldwyn Lewis (Chair), Councillors Shelley Childs, Bryan Davies, Catrin M S Davies, Clive Davies, Euros Davies, Gareth Davies, Gethin Davies, Ifan Davies, Marc Davies, Meirion Davies, Rhodri Davies, Amanda Edwards, Endaf Edwards, Elizabeth Evans, Eryl Evans, Gwyn Wigley Evans, Keith Evans, Raymond Evans, Rhodri Evans, Wyn Evans, Keith Henson, Paul Hinge, Hugh Hughes, Chris James, Gareth Lloyd, Sian Maehrlein, Ann Bowen Morgan, Caryl Roberts, John Roberts, Mark Strong, Wyn Thomas, Matthew Vaux, Alun Williams and Carl Worrall.

(2.00pm - 3.28pm)

Procedure

The Chairman of the Council, Councillor Maldwyn Lewis welcomed all to the meeting and confirmed that the meeting was being webcasted.

1 Apologies

Councillors Elaine Evans and Ceris Jones apologised for their inability to attend the meeting;

Mr Barry Rees apologised for his inability to attend the meeting due to being on other Council duties.

2 Disclosure of personal / prejudicial interests

There were no disclosures of interest.

3 Chair Announcements

Councillor Maldwyn Lewis, Chair of the Council congratulated the following:

- a) Professor Sir John Edmunds OBE, on being named a knight bachelor for services to epidemiology;
- b) Shann Jones, on receiving a MBE for services to charity and innovation;
- c) Robin Varley, on receiving an OBE for services to cricket in Wales;
- d) Steve Williams on winning the final stage to seal overall victory in the 'Tour Down Under';
- e) Siwan Owen, Coleg Gelli Aur on winning the LANTRA pupil of the year;
- f) Congratulations to all the small businesses that have established in Ceredigion, and best wishes to them for the future.

4 To confirm the Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 14 December 2023 and the Minutes of the Special Meeting of Council held on 14 December 2023

It was **RESOLVED** to confirm as a true record the Minutes of the Council meeting held at 10.00am on 14 December 2023, and the Special Meeting of Council which was held at 200pm on 14 December 2023.

There were no matters arising.

5 To consider the Report of the Corporate Lead Officer for Finance and Procurement upon the Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2024/25

Councillor Gareth Davies, Cabinet Member for Finance and Procurement presented the report noting that, in accordance with the Council Tax Reduction Schemes and Prescribed Requirements (Wales) Regulation 2013 there is a statutory obligation for a report to be presented to full council on an annual basis, even if there has been no change in the scheme since the previous year.

He noted that since the abolition of Council Tax Benefit in April 2013, the responsibility for arranging Council Tax support to those on low incomes transferred from the Department for Work and Pensions to local authorities, and that the Welsh Government approved two sets of regulations that prescriptive the main features of the scheme to be adopted by all Councils in Wales. The majority of the costs of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme payments is met by Welsh Government, however there is still a significant requirement for Councils to meet the costs of payments that exceeds their contribution. With 23/24 estimated costs of c£6.5m, there is circa £1.3m of costs that are not being recognised by Welsh Government in the Local Government Finance Settlement.

Following a vote, it was **RESOLVED** to:

1. Note the making of the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements and Default Scheme) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2024;
2. Adopt the provisions of the Prescribed Requirement Regulations (2013) as the Council's Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2024/25, subject to the local discretions that the Council is able to exercise as set out below:
 - (i) Continue to apply a 100% disregard beyond the statutory £10 disregard for War Disablement Pensions, War Widows' Pensions and War Widowers' Pensions, for both pensioners and working age claimants.
 - (ii) Not to increase the extended payment periods for pensioners and working age claimants from the standard 4 weeks currently contained within the Prescribed Scheme.
 - (iii) Not to increase the backdate period for pensioners and working age claimants from the standard 3 months contained within the Prescribed Scheme.

6 To consider the report of the Corporate Lead Officer for Democratic Services upon the Polling District, Places and Polling Stations Review 2023

Councillor Bryan Davies, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Democratic Services, Policy, Performance and People and Organisation

presented the report to Council noting that The Electoral Administration Act 2006, as amended, introduces a duty on all local authorities to review their polling districts and polling places at least once every five years. He noted that a report was presented to Cabinet on 5 September 2023, where it was agreed to commence the compulsory review on 2 October 2023, with consultation ending on 10 November 2023.

He noted that a preliminary review was conducted within the Ceredigion area with a view to establishing their suitability, and identify any potential alternatives, where considered appropriate, taking into consideration the location, size, availability and accessibility of polling places and stations. 16 responses were received as part of the formal consultation which can be viewed in Appendix A, together with the (Acting) Returning Officer's comments and proposals.

Councillor Bryan Davies noted that after publishing the agenda, a late response was received from the Llwyncelyn Village Hall noting that they would be willing to give exclusive use as a polling station on polling day. Having considered this late response, he proposed that should the amended recommendation be approved, the recommendation to move the polling station from the Church Hall in Llanarth to the Ysgubor on Bargoed Farm would be completely removed from the recommendations at the end of the report.

Eifion Evans, Chief Executive and (Acting) Returning Officer explained that the Llwyncelyn Chapel Vestry had been deemed unsuitable as a Polling Station, as the Village Hall Committee had insisted upon continuing with other activities at the Hall on the day of election and not been able to guarantee exclusive use on polling day. Councillor Marc Davies stated that a guarantee from the Llwyncelyn Village Hall Committee that there would be exclusive use for the polling station and that no other activities would be held in the Hall during elections had been sent; and this was confirmed by Lowri Edwards, Corporate Lead Officer of Democratic Services.

Councillor John Roberts queried whether the building alongside Commins Coch School would be available, as it is now closed. Eifion Evans, confirmed that the building is owned by Ceredigion County council, therefore would not be affected by the closure.

Councillor Euros Davies noted that he was aware of the consultation but he and the Community Council had failed to provide a response. He noted that concerns had been raised in terms of transferring the Polling Station from Llanwnnen Church Hall to Ysgol Cwrtnwydd, which could impact upon turnout as the voters in Llanwnnen normally walk to vote. He asked whether the 'Y Granell' could be considered as an alternative location.

Eifion Evans explained that the Polling Station in Llanwnnen Church Hall is unsatisfactory and does not meet with the requirements of the Election Act 2022. It is proposed that the Polling Station is relocated to Ysgol Cwrtnwydd due to the lack of options in Llanwnnen. 'Y Granell' is a public house, and it is therefore unlikely that the landlord would be willing to close

the public house for a whole day in order for it to be used as a polling station, whilst ensuring the integrity of the election and the confidentiality of the voting public and ensuring that they would not be disrupted.

Councillor Euros Davies noted that Bargoed Farm is also a public house; however Eifion Evans explained that Bargoed Farm were able to provide a separate building for the polling station. Councillor Euros Davies also asked whether this goes against the Council's policy in terms of transport and Carbon Footprint. Eifion Evans explained that the Election process is completely separate from that of the Council's duties.

Eifion Evans noted that as (Acting) Returning Officer, he does have delegated powers to review the arrangements at any point, and should Llanwnnen Church Hall receive grant funding to improve the facilities, bringing it up to a standard that is acceptable in terms of the requirements of the Election Act 2022, or if an alternative suitable venue was identified, he would revisit this decision within the 5 year review period.

Councillor Keith Henson asked what would happen if facilities, such as the Old School in Cribyn (Canolfan Steffan) did not become available. It was confirmed that there is a recommendation to transfer the Polling Station to Felinfach in the short term, and that it would return to Canolfan Steffan in Cribyn once the facilities are up to a suitable standard and available for use as a polling station.

Councillor Eryl Evans asked whether Ysgol y Dderi would close during the day of the election, noting that this would be unfair on the pupils. Eifion Evans confirmed that a separate entrance is provided for pupils at Ysgol y Dderi, Llangybi, and therefore it would remain open on polling day. Councillor Eryl Evans also asked about parking arrangements for parents dropping off and collecting their children from school. Eifion Evans confirmed that this would be a matter for the School's Governing Body.

Councillor Gareth Lloyd asked that individuals Members are notified of any proposals to change the current arrangements in their Ward, as many of them had failed to respond to the consultation.

The proposed change to Llanarth Church Hall was withdrawn.

Following discussion, it was **RESOLVED**:

- a) To note that no changes are made to Polling Districts;
- b) That the following changes are made to Polling Places and Polling Stations
 - Salvation Army moves to Canolfan Morlan, Aberystwyth;
 - Llanwnnen Church Hall moves to Ysgol Cwrtnewydd;
 - Betws Ifan Community Hall moves to Beulah Chapel Vestry;
 - Bryngwyn Chapel Vestry moves to Beulah Chapel Vestry;
 - Llandygwydd moves to Beulah Chapel Vestry;
 - Llangybi Hall moves to Community Centre at Ysgol Y Dderi;
 - Neuadd y Paith moves to Llanfarian Village Hall;

- Llwynceilyn Chapel Vestry moves to Llwynceilyn Village Hall;
 - Canolfan y Dyffryn moves to Aberporth Village Hall.
- c) That contingency arrangements are put in place for the following Polling Stations:
- Harbour House, Trefechan to use Aberystwyth Football Club;
 - Canolfan Steffan, Cribyn to use Felinfach Memorial Hall;
 - Neuadd Aberporth to use Canolfan y Dyffryn.

7 Membership of the Council and the Committees of Council

It was **RESOLVED** to confirm the Membership of the Council's Committees as presented at the meeting.

Confirmed at the Meeting of the Council held on 29 February 2024

CHAIRMAN: _____