

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Town Council held on Wednesday 17th August

Present: Cllrs P. James, N. Price, J. Davies, A. Edwards, J. Rowlands, L. Pace-Avery, P. Lambkin, S. Jones ,
T. Van Rees, P. Tonks.

Mr G Jones (School support Services)
Mrs K. Thomas (Principal Librarian for Powys)

Apologies for Absence: Cllr A. Jones

In Attendance: L E Ball (Clerk and RFO) Cllrs convened at 6:45pm.

Cllr James outlined the reasons for the meeting, informing members that both Mrs K. Thomas of the Library Service and Mr G Jones of the Schools Support Services would be joining the meeting to take forward proposals regarding the maintenance of the Town Library.

He expressed his concern regarding the differing figures that had been received relating to the running costs of the Library, that there was great confusion and that a solution needed to be found before the end of September when the issue would go before Cabinet at Powys County Council.

Several questions were raised regarding;

- the status of Builth Library,
- the facilities available if the mobile library was an option, whether those communities already served by the mobile Library were being asked to contribute to the service and if not why was the Town Council being asked to contribute funds to the service.

Cllr James called the meeting to order and asked Mrs Thomas and Mr Davies to enter the meeting at 7:00pm.

Cllr James welcomed both speakers and reiterated the fact that there was a great deal of confusion and the Town Council felt that it was working in the dark.

He asked the question - How many people use the Library on a regular basis? Mrs Thomas replied that it varied greatly from 7-51 during the week. The figures were a reflection of those people who "came through the doors" and not those who regularly borrowed books.

Mr G Davies of Schools Support Services outlined the financial position with regard the Library as it is physically part of Ysgol Dolafon Primary School building.

Energy costs:

- Currently the water and oil costs are split between the Library service and the School in the ratio of 85% school 15% library service which is calculated on a formula 75% based on the floor area of the school and 25% based on pupil numbers.
- All electricity costs are met by the school.

Mr Davies indicated that some assessment could be done with regard energy costs for the Library alone and that he would communicate with Mr G. Richards at Property Services to get this done.

It was pointed out that the figures given to the Town Council could not be accurate in terms of the raised precept as it included the Community Councils of Trefllys and Llangammarrch. If these were taken out of the equation the figure given would actually rise four fold. These local Councils have made it clear that they are currently served by the mobile library and were not in a position to contribute to the Library in Llanwrtyd whilst this was still in place.

Mrs Thomas indicated that the minimum requirement for a library to be viable was 10hrs a week. It was suggested that if we had the opportunity to reduce the hours to six then with the aid of volunteers (there are sufficient) we would be able to keep the library open.

Mrs Thomas stated that currently there were no libraries with shared responsibilities but they could continue to provide stock and would offer appropriate training for the volunteers. The issue of volunteers would need to be investigated further as it had implications for safeguarding of children and access to Powys Services within the library.

The Town Council would support volunteers wholeheartedly.

The question was raised as to whether the communities being served by the mobile library were being asked to contribute to that service and if not why was Llanwrtyd Town Council being asked to contribute to their service. The question was asked if the situation had been examined whereby local outlying Communities would have the mobile service removed as the distance to the main Library is very small.

Mrs Thomas responded that no mobile Library comes within 2 miles of any static library and that the mobile service was aimed at those most vulnerable in rural Communities.

Cllr James asked if there were any other schools in a similar situation where the library was physically attached. Mr. Jones responded that to date Llanwrtyd was unique in this respect but negotiations were currently in progress to transfer a library over to a School and that the new Community Schools being built would have integral Community Libraries.

The question was asked what effect would a possible closure of the Library have on the school itself as the facility would be surplus to requirements.

Mr Jones responded that if the school wanted both libraries then the library service would make a contribution to the school but he was keen to point out that the school could not make a contribution to a Town Library. There was no threat to the School's Children's library as the school had an administrator.

Members felt that the Town Council needed to know what the different scenarios are in terms of costing and opening hours. Mr Jones agreed to put together some figures for 6hrs opening with revised energy costs.

It was generally felt that the solution put forward by Mrs Thomas to have six hours opening time offered by the library service and the remainder found by the Community in terms of either a contribution or use of Volunteers was one worth pursuing.

Cllr James outlined the fact that certain services advertised by Powys were not available in Llanwrtyd as the computers were not connected. He felt that this needed to be rectified and the full potential of the service should be available and accessible within the Community. The problem with access to Powys Services could be that it is co-located with the School and this would be investigated.

Mr Jones revised his offer through the chair and said he would put figures together for a variety of scenarios and would get these back to the Council as soon as possible.

The question of what the consequences of not meeting the statutory 10hrs was raised but Mrs Thomas was not able to give an answer and said she would find the answer and get back to the Council.

It was felt by members that the offer of accurate financial figures was to be pursued and that the idea of 6hrs with a professional librarian topped up by 4hours by volunteers was a solution that was amenable to all and would not incur increase

Cllr James thanked both Mr Jones and Mrs Thomas for their productive input indicating that a possible solution was in sight. Mr Jones and Mrs Thomas left the meeting at 7:55pm.

Cllr Van Rees left the meeting to attend another engagement at 7.57pm

1. Public Toilets

The Clerk informed members that there had only been one expression of interest to date.

Cllr James clarified with members the plans for the forthcoming refurbishment indicating that the outside doors would be coin operated thereby giving an element of security to the premises. Once inside the shower cubicles would have further coin operated doors. A copy of the plans was circulated for members to peruse.

Cllr Rowlands enquired as to the cost of the project and whether sufficient funds were available. The Clerk reminded members of the grant offer and the proposed costings as per the schedule. Until The Council had received quotes from those interested we could not be more specific about actual cost.

Cllr James felt that it would be apposite to have three quotes and after some discussion it was resolved to extend the date for expressions of interest to Friday 2nd September.

Cllr James informed members that the toilets were currently being cleaned 3 times a week for 20 minutes by the handyman Mr Dodds. He informed members that a quote had been received from Powys for a cleaning contract which was over £7000.00. This was well above the figure that Powys County Council originally gave us for the cleaning of the building and was over double that of the annual grant received for the complete maintenance and running of the facility.

Cleaning of the facility would be discussed further when the refurbishment had been completed.

Resolved :

- That the expression of interest date be extended to Friday 2nd September.
- That when expressions of interest had been received a bill of quantities will be sent out to all interested.
- That a decision would be made on the basis of the best quote for the work to be done within the timescale given.

Action ; Clerk to redo advert for expression of interest and get them into all places that builders frequent.

2. ROSPA

Cllr Price outlined the main points of the report which had been circulated to all members before the meeting. There were several minor jobs to be done with the play area but some significant work to be addressed on the skate park which could cost a great deal. The question was raised as to whether the handyman Mr Dodds be asked to do all the work and whether he had the necessary skills to carry out some of the work. The issue of whether he would be willing to do the job.

It was suggested that since there were few immediate high risk issues and the fact that the town Council were currently engaged in maintaining the Library, that the report should be revisited at the next Town Council meeting in September. This was agreed by all members present.

3. Caretaker Responsibilities

Cllr James outlined an issue regarding the cutting of the grass at Nant Y Rhos. Historically this work was agreed between the Town Council and Mr Dodds and has carried on over the years without an annual review.

At present Mr Dodds

- maintains the 19 benches within the Town
- cuts the grass at Nant Yx Rhos and along the avenue of trees on Dolwen Field
- cleans the toilets for an hour a week
- monitors the play area logging on a weekly basis the state of the equipment, logs any faults and records any remedial work done
- litter picks

Currently Mr Dodds submits an invoice to the Town Council for work carried out on a quarterly basis

The question arises is he an employee of the Town Council? When does a handyman become an employee?

This was not clear and members requested clarification of the issue. The Clerk to make contact with one Voice Wales to gain some insight ready for the next Town Council meeting.

When this is clarified Cllr James and the Clerk will make contact with Mr Dodds to discuss issues arising.

4. Arwain

The Clerk enquired whether to go forward in filling the expression of interest forms for Arwain. Cllr James informed members that any projects would be honoured until 2020 and therefore this funding should be secure and agreed that the project should be taken forward. All members agreed that the form should be completed and funding begin to be sought.

It was felt that the development committee be a major part in this project as it was not a task for one person.

5. Arrangements for Twinning Visit

Cllr Davies outlined the schedule for the Twinning visit and Cllr James outlined the procedure for the official meeting of delegations from Meriel and Cesky Krumlov which will be held on the morning of Saturday 20th August at 9:30am in the Town Council Chambers.

Gifts would be given to representatives of each Country at the evening celebrations. Cllr James gave a big thankyou to Cllr Pace Avery who had donated two handmade samplers to give to each of the delegates. These were currently being framed by Whistlers in Llanwrtyd a price to be negotiated by Cllr James.

Cllr Davies informed members that the Twinning Association was presenting each delegate with a miners' lamp.

Cllr James thanked all Cllrs for taking the time to come to the meeting during recess and closed the meeting at 8:45pm

Signed

Date