



CLERK'S REPORT – MARCH 2023

The past month has been extremely busy with a large number of meetings and still lots going on in the Hall. The outside staff are getting ready for grass-cutting season, whilst in the office, we are preparing for the end of the financial year and the challenges of the year ahead.

I'd like to congratulate Cllrs Steve Eldridge, Joanne Anderson and Gary Jones on their success in the recent by-elections. All three members have met with me and have read and signed their Declarations of Acceptance of Office.

Myself and the rest of the staff wish to offer our condolences to Walford Williams and his family on the recent passing of his mother.

1. Policy Review

The Policy Review Committee and the Clerk met for a workshop on Monday 6th March 2023 and spent four hours looking at Terms of Reference for a potential new Assets Committee and changes to the Hall Committee Terms of Reference. As the Committee is following the Finance & Governance Toolkit for Town & Community Councils and wishes for the Council to consider adopting the Civility and Respect Pledge, the focus was on creating policies to assist with this. The following policies were created and will be presented to Council in the March meeting: Dignity at Work; E-mail Protocol; Recruitment and Selection Policy & Procedure and Social Media Policy.

The Policy Review Committee will meet again on 14th March 2023 to discuss the One Voice Wales Training Assessment. Over the coming weeks the Committee will also meet to discuss and create the following policies: Training & Development Plan; Data Protection Policy; Business Recovery Plan; Display Screen Equipment Policy; Document Retention & Disposal Policy; Equality & Diversity Policy; Information Security Policy; Stress Management Policy; Volunteering Policy; Whistleblowing Policy.

2. Carmarthenshire County Council's Public Services Board Annual Review

The Public Services Board of Carmarthenshire County Council has its' annual review on Monday 20th March at the John Burn's Centre in Llanelli. I am required to present on the day, explaining how the Council has met Carmarthenshire County Council's wellbeing objectives during 2022-23. The Deputy-Clerk will also be attending this event.

3. Llanelli Community Council's Annual Report

The staff and I are currently working on the Council's Annual Report, detailing the Council's priorities, activities and achievements, which will be presented in the April meeting of Full Council.

4. Section 6 Biodiversity Duty

The Council has a duty to report its' work on biodiversity in accordance with Section 6 of the Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty (Environment (Wales) Act 2016). The Deputy-Clerk has prepared and circulated a template report for the Environment Committee to discuss at their next meeting, scheduled for 21st March 2023.

5. UK Shared Prosperity Fund

I attended an online information session regarding this fund on Thursday 9th March. I have circulated the link for the fund to the Members. There is £2m available in the Sustainable Communities Fund with a maximum award of £250k. There is also a Rural Innovation Fund which the Council can access.



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Sustainable Communities Fund

The aim of the Sustainable Communities Fund is to provide the necessary support to help strengthen the social fabric of communities, building pride in place whilst also delivering direct and/or indirect economic benefit.

The grant will focus on the following themes which have been identified as a priority within the County's Strategic Investment Plan

- Tackling poverty
- Circular Economy
- Wellbeing / Leisure

- Access to Services
- Environment and Green
- Tourism, Culture / Heritage
- Community Engagement

Eligible projects

The following are examples of the type of eligible activities that may be considered for funding:

- Funding for new, or improvements to existing, community and neighbourhood infrastructure including local green spaces.
- Support for local arts, cultural, heritage and creative activities.
- Support for active travel enhancement and other small-scale green transport infrastructure projects.
- Funding for the development and promotion of wider campaigns and year-round experiences which encourage people to visit and explore the local area.
- Funding for impactful volunteering and/or social action
- Funding for local sports facilities
- Investment in capacity building and infrastructure support for community groups.
- Community measures to reduce the cost of living including measures to improve energy efficiency, and combat fuel poverty and climate change.
- Funding to support relevant feasibility studies.
- Investment and support for digital infrastructure for local community facilities

Application Deadlines

Sustainable Communities – total fund amount - £2,000,000

1st call for applications - allocated budget £1,000,000

Opening 1 March, 2023 - deadline for applications – 29 March, 2023

2nd call for applications – allocated budget £750,000

Opening 1 April, 2023 - deadline for applications – 26 April, 2023

3rd call for applications – allocated budget £250,000

Opening 1 May, 2023 - deadline for applications – 29 September, 2023



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Rural Innovation Fund

Carmarthenshire's Rural Innovation Fund is designed to get local people, businesses and communities involved in delivering sustainable, yet innovative solutions to address some of the economic, social and environmental challenges facing rural areas.

This revenue fund provides an opportunity for organisations delivering services or working with rural communities to pilot new ways of working or trial ideas that tackle rural issues aligned with key identified priorities.

Eligible activity

- Facilitation - support to organisations and groups to help them develop their own skills and expertise.
- Pilot Projects – small scale and time limited activities (no longer than 12 months) aimed at testing out a concept.
- Research – revenue costs for a combination of staff time and consultancy costs to undertake the background research for a specific problem or issue.

What is on offer?

Maximum award of £45k

Maximum 12-month delivery period

Call 1 - Closing Date: **29/03/2023** - Budget allocated for Call: **£250k**

Call 2 - Closing Date: **26/04/2023** - Budget allocated for Call: **£250k**

Call 3 - Closing Date: **29/09/2023** - Budget allocated for Call: **Amount subject to remaining unallocated budget.**

Ideas for applications to both funds will be discussed in the March Full Council Meeting.

6. Cross Hands Growth Plan Team Update

I attended a meeting of the Cross Hands Growth Plan Team on Monday 27th February 2023. Also in attendance were Councillors, Julie Owen & Llinos Davies. I have forwarded an email from Natasha Mainwaring (CCC Rural Market Towns Officer) with a summary of the meeting. The next meeting is scheduled on 20th March 2023.

7. Cross Hands App Update

It was requested by CCC that we did not launch the app until the Growth Plan Team had been given the opportunity to see the final product and feedback. I have received confirmation from Discover that the app is finalised and it will be officially launched at the end of this week. I submitted a claim form to recover the monies paid and am pleased to report the £9750.00 was reimbursed this week.

8. Cross Hands Playground Update

The tendering process closes on Friday 17th March 2023. An EGM will be held on Wednesday 22nd March to discuss and agree a tender, enabling the successful company to be notified by Friday 24th March 2023. During a call with CCC Bureau last Thursday, I was made aware that no application has ever officially been made for the S106 money currently set aside for this project. Despite numerous conversations with CCC Officers regarding the S106 money, I have never been made previously aware of this. As the application is dependent on consultation results, I will be submitting the application at



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the end of this week. I am assured the money (£45k) is still ringfenced but could be in jeopardy without an application and this will still require approval.

9. Household Food Poverty Fund April 2023 – June 2023

The closing date for the next round of funding which runs from 1st April – 30th June and is for a maximum of £7000 was 23rd February 2023. I have submitted an application for the full amount and will advise the Council when I am made aware of the outcome.

10. Penderi Solar Farm

I have made enquiries with the Clerk of Llanelli Rural Council and the Clerk of Llangennech Community Council as to whether there is an update on contributions the Council's will receive from this project. I will notify Council when I receive a full update.

11. 2023-2024 Budget, Precept & Reserve Consideration

Since February's Full Council meeting, a Finance Committee meeting was held on Monday 20th February 2023, lasting 2 and a half hours for members to produce the final draft of the 23-24 budget, precept request and reserve recommendations. This meeting was attended by the Clerk and Deputy-Clerk.

An EGM was held on Wednesday 22nd February 2023 to discuss and set the 23-24 budget, precept request and reserve levels. The precept request was set at £392,434.13. This meeting was attended by the Clerk, Deputy-Clerk and Facilities and Administration Assistant. Following the meeting, the Precept Request Form was signed by Cllr Julie Owen and returned to Carmarthenshire County Council, with confirmation received of the Council's Precept Requirement of £392,434.13. A Press Release was circulated via social media and the Council website.

12. Internal Auditor

We have been trying to source a suitably qualified internal auditor since last year. A firm was appointed by the council to carry out the 2021-2022 audit, but it became apparent they did not have the ability to carry out a sufficient audit when they completed the incorrect information on the Annual Return of another local council.

Having contacted four, reputable companies, we have met with two who have capacity to work with the Council. Both companies are within a thirty-minute radius of the Council, both are Chartered Accountants, and both have experience of auditing local councils. This will be discussed further in March's meeting where the Council will need to appoint one firm to carry out the 2021-2022 internal audit and 2022-2023 internal audit. The Wales Audit Office have been appraised of the situation.

13. Asset Register

The Council's asset register is currently being updated, which has also required the appointment of a Chartered Surveyor to provide up to date valuations of the Council's fixed assets. The Council's insurance renewal is due in April, so this has to be completed as a matter of urgency and a reputable Chartered Surveyor has been engaged to conduct this work on Tuesday 21st March 2023. We are currently also compiling lists and valuations of the smaller assets.



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14. Banking Arrangements

In what has proven to be a very difficult process, all old signatories have finally been removed from the Council's bank accounts. New signatories have been added and need to be registered for online banking in order that we may start a dual authorisation process for making payments. We aim to complete this process to go in to the 2023-24 financial year with these controls in place.

15. Financial Regulations & Risk Register

Will need to be reviewed in the EGM on 22nd March 2023.

16. One Voice Wales Membership Renewal

We have received correspondence advising the OVW Membership for 2023-2024 is £939.00. This will be on the agenda for April's Full Council meeting.

17. IRPW Report Re: Contribution to costs and expenses of members of Community and Town Councils: Determination 4

"Last year the Panel carried out a major review of the remuneration framework for community and town councils and undertook a comprehensive consultation exercise with the sector. The Framework was updated then and this year the Panel has decided to make limited but important changes.

The Panel recognise that all members of community and town councils necessarily spend time working from home on council business. This was the case before and during COVID and is continuing. As a result, members have extra domestic costs and also need office consumables.

The Panel considers members should not be out of pocket for carrying out their duties. However, an individual may decline to receive part, or all, of the payments if they so wish. This must be done in writing and is an individual matter. A community or town council member wishing to decline payments must themselves write to their proper officer to do so. Each community and town council must ensure that it does not create a climate which prevents persons accessing any monies to which they are entitled that may support them to participate in local democracy. Payments should be made efficiently and promptly.

Reimbursement for extra costs of working from home.

All councils must pay their members £156 a year (equivalent to £3 a week) towards the extra household expenses (including heating, lighting, power and broadband) of working from home.

Reimbursement for consumables

Councils must either pay their members £52 a year for the cost of office consumables required to carry out their role, or alternatively councils must enable members to claim full reimbursement for the cost of their office consumables.

It is a matter for each council to make and record a policy decision in respect of when and how the payments are made and whether they are paid monthly, yearly or otherwise. The policy should also state whether and how to recover any payments made to a member who leaves or changes their role during the financial year.

Group 4 Electorate 1,000 to 4,999



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- Extra Costs Payment Mandatory for all members - £156 WFH plus £52 Consumables/Full Reimbursement
- Senior Role Optional up to 3 members
- Mayor or Chair Optional - Up to a maximum of £1,500
- Deputy Mayor or Deputy Chair Optional - Up to a maximum of £500
- Attendance Allowance Optional
- Financial Loss Optional
- Travel and Subsistence Optional
- Cost of Care or Personal Assistance Mandatory”

This will be put on the agenda for April's meeting.

I have circulated information regarding 2022-23 Councillor Allowances which all members must respond to by Friday 17th March 2023 please.

18. Training

At the beginning of month, Ffion and Wendi undertook the two-day Cemetery Management and Compliance Training Course.

As part of the Civility & Respect Pledge, I have registered for the SLCC “Understanding Psychopathic and Narcissistic Behaviour Webinar” which, Cllr Julie Owen and the Deputy-Clerk will also attend. If anyone else would like to attend, please let me know.

The Deputy-Clerk and I are attending a two-day Community Asset Training this week.

We are currently in the process of arranging Fire Safety and First Aid Training for all staff.

We have one place booked on the One Voice Wales Planning Event on 22nd March 2023 which will be streamed in the Conference Room, enabling us to offer more places. Please email me if you wish to attend.

All new Councillors have been e-mailed regarding Code of Conduct training. Currently the following existing members have not undertaken the training which is compulsory and reminders have been emailed: Cllr Chris Bowkett; Cllr Michael Jones; Cllr Nigel Thomas; Cllr Emyr Gwyn Evans.

19. Council Van Repairs

The Transit van has required repair work in the sum of £820.18, completed by Marshall Motors, who as always provided an excellent service.

20. New John Deere

The new ride-on mower (purchase agreed in November's meeting) has been delivered. It has been registered and insured.

21. Cemetery Repairs following accident.

Two quotations have been submitted to the third party insurance company and I await confirmation as to which company will be instructed to carry out the repairs. As soon as I am aware, I will be contacting all the grave owners we have details for.



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22. Tumble Memorial

The repairs to the wall have been completed by Walford, Sean & Lester and they have done a lovely job. Flowers will be planted shortly.

23. Footpath Clearing

The outside staff are currently focussing on clearing the ten footpaths the Council maintain on behalf of CCC. The quality of their work is outstanding and has made a huge difference to the footpaths they have already worked on.

24. Tumble Hall

- Elections held in hall on Thursday 2nd March, followed by the count.
- Welsh Whisperer booked to perform on 13th October 2023.
- Community Carol Service arranged for Sunday 3rd December 2023.
- New Classes Starting Soon: Ballet Class, Pilates, Chair-Based Exercise, Cake Decorating.
- Karate class has been cancelled due to lack of uptake.
- Salsa Class is starting after Easter.
- Design for staircase has been agreed.
- Patch Plumbing has been working on the works required following the legionella safety report and has been at the hall for a number of days.
- Phase Connections have carried out their monthly emergency lighting check and continue with the works necessary to bring the electrics up to standard.
- Following the recent incidents at the hall, the CCTV recorder has been upgraded.
- We have received extremely positive feedback regarding the improvements to the library.
- Lester has been working on weekends to finish painting and has done an excellent job.
- New carpet is to be fitted in the porch and passage shortly.

25. Y Cwtch

- Unfortunately, no further funding pots have been made available to sustain staffing in Y Cwtch so from 1st April 2023, the opening hours will return to Monday, Wednesday & Thursday. The Family Centre and LINKS will still run their sessions. The Personnel Committee will need to meet, to discuss this going forward.
- FareShare Cymru are visiting this week.
- Received donation of £250 from Maesrhosderi Tenants & Residents Association.

Mrs Clare Hope (Clerk to the Council)

14th March 2023