



CHIEF OFFICER'S REPORT – OCTOBER 2024

Overview

October has been an extremely busy month where I have spent most of my time in training sessions, seminars and conferences, learning from the valuable experience of my colleagues within the sector.

I have also continued to concentrate on the priorities of the Council's Well-being Plan and Community Engagement Policy and have written an Autumn/Winter Newsletter. The Newsletter provides an overview of the vast services that the Council is responsible for and "What's On" in Tumble Hall.

I have also been preparing a workshop to formulate ideas from the Members in conjunction with the results of the Community Survey and the Council's Well-being Plan 2023-2028.

You may be aware that The Senedd Local Government and Housing Committee has agreed to undertake an inquiry into role, governance and accountability of the community and town council sector.

The terms of reference for the inquiry are to examine:

- The role and value of community and town councils in Wales.
- Whether the sector is fit for purpose in an evolving local government landscape.
- Governance and scrutiny arrangements and its impact on accountability and transparency.
- Scope of digital and new technology to improve decision-making, service provision and participation in local democratic processes.
- How new powers and responsibilities for this tier of government are utilised to support communities.

I represented Clerks in our area at a roundtable event in the Senedd last Wednesday, Chaired by Siân Gwenllian MS and attended by Committee Member, Lee Waters MS. With only two hours and ten Clerks present, we covered the main challenges faced by Town and Community Councils in Wales. Sadly, bullying and harassment of Clerks and Councillors was highlighted as a key challenge.

Deputy Prime Minister, Angela Rayner announced in the Local Government Association Conference that the Government will consult on reform of the local government standards framework including a proposal to allow for the suspension of members who violate codes of conduct.

Ms Rayner told delegates that she had 'been made aware of cases of persistent bullying and harassment by councillors, even in some cases leading to victims' resignations. We don't have a system in place that protects victims or empowers councils to deal with unacceptable behaviour. And this cannot go on.'

You will note that the October meeting agenda incorporates the adoption of a vexatious complaints and requests policy and a commitment to the Civility & Respect Pledge.



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Governance and Administration

- I continue to carry out the tasks required to hold Council meetings: administration; preparation of documents; set up of video conferencing; attendance of online and in-house translators & security.
- I have put together a draft vexatious complaints & requests policy & have researched and presented the Civility & Respect Pledge.
- One Voice Wales published new model Financial Regulations last week so I have reviewed the recommendations, discussed them with the Chair of Finance and have arranged a Finance Committee Meeting on 4th November 2024. The Finance Committee will prepare a draft version for inclusion in November's Full Council Meeting. The Standing Orders will also need to be amended to include any changes to the Financial Regulations.
- I have been liaising with SAMM regarding the initial set up of our new software.
- The Council has received a "thank you" card from Merched Y Wawr for the £500 donation.

Strategic Development

- Police matters – On the request of the Police, I attended a Multi-Agency Site Meeting at Ffordd Y Neuadd, Cross Hands on Monday 21st October 2024. Cllr. Dot Jones is following this up with the Head of Planning.
- Y Cwtsh is still open twice a week. Members can use the Community Supermarket once a week and are encouraged to visit on other day to have a cuppa and a chat; enjoy a free bowl of soup and collect "Slow Cooker Packs" (a weekly pack made up with healthy ingredients for a meal that can be cooked in a slow cooker).
- Cinio a Chlonc is going extremely well and despite a small increase in price, we have more Members attending. We are holding a Christmas Lunch on Friday, 6th December 2024 and would be grateful for any additional help. Please let me know if you are available.
- I continue to liaise with the project manager regarding Parc Y Mynydd Mawr and Cross Hands Park. I will be busy over the next few weeks as all funding from SPF must be claimed by 31st December 2024.
- I am still awaiting a date from the Lawn Tennis Association for the official opening of Cross Hands Park.
- I have had several conversations with Dr Kirsty Bilski who has been representing Cross Hands Hall & Cinema. As no children's film was advertised for October Half-Term. With the agreement of the Chair and Vice-Chair, I suggested LICC could consider paying for a free screening (£196) instead of arranging our own at Tumble Hall (£220). I'm pleased to report that they will be showing three, free screenings of "Hocus Pocus" during the holidays, supported by LICC. I am assured that future advertising will reflect this. We hope to work together on future well-being initiatives.
- I have received a design for a new playground at Y Graig and am awaiting a few amendments. I am also awaiting a design for a new playground at Caeglas/Tirwaun Park. I will forward these to the Members once I receive them.



Workshops

The Members of Llannon Community Council are yet to complete the Self-Assessment Section of the Finance & Governance Toolkit. I have written a series of workshops to enable the Members to complete the toolkit, whilst also considering the Council's forward plans to May 2027.

Workshop 1 - Vision, purpose and community planning

Community and town councils provide community leadership. In exercising this role, Llannon Community Council will benefit from having a clear vision for our community.

This vision will inform the community of council plans, budgets and activities to ensure the council works in the best interests of the community.

Discussion topics:

- Vision & Purpose Statement
- Place Plan
- 2-Year Strategy
- Annual Report
- Training & Development Plan

The two dates that I currently have available to deliver this workshop are Wednesday, 13th November 2024 at 6pm in Tumble Hall or Wednesday, 20th November at 6pm in Tumble Hall.

Dates of future workshops will be agreed at future Council meetings.

AGENDA ITEM 10 - To confirm a date to hold Workshop 1 – Vision, purpose and community planning. 13th November 2024 or 20th November 2024, 6pm – Tumble Hall.

DECISION REQUIRED

Financial Governance and Accountability

- Ffion is now officially the RFO. Ffion continues to keep all cashbooks and reconciliations up to date and prepared all the paperwork for the finance meeting held on 21st October 2024.
- One Voice Wales issued new Financial Regulations last week. The Finance Committee will meet on 4th November 2024 to discuss this and put forward their recommendations to Council in November's meeting.
- Ffion is currently reviewing the Council's Financial Risk Register, this will also be reviewed by the Finance Committee on 4th November 2024.
- Payroll for October was submitted to CCC which included all backdated pay and updated salary scales.
- Ffion and I are currently preparing a draft budget for 2024-25.



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- The VAT return for July to September 2024 has been submitted and should be received shortly.
- We still await our finalised audits from Audit Wales from 2021-22, 2022-23, 2023-24. A notice has been published on the Council's website to confirm this in accordance with our statutory duties.
- Members Allowances have also been published in accordance with our statutory duties.

Information Management and Information Technology

- I have dealt with 3 Freedom of Information Requests.
- Openreach have installed the required infrastructure for our new broadband connection. They anticipate this will go live over the next few days.

Estates and Facilities Management

Tumble Hall

- Tumble Surgery have recently vaccinated over a thousand people during their flu and covid clinics held at the Hall.
- The boiler requires new valves which will be fitted next week.
- New carpet for stairs & landing has been ordered.
- New flooring for kitchen has been ordered.
- Kitchen canopy has received annual inspection and certificate issued.
- Strong smell of oil in disabled toilets was traced by Welsh Water to an oil leak in Capel Bethel.

Additional Defibrillator

- Cadw Mynydd Mawr yn Daclus have recently completed a walk to raise money for a new defibrillator to be sited at Capel Bethania, in memory of former Councillor, Lesley Williams. Lesley was the founding member of Cadw Mynydd Mawr yn Daclus.
- The group are ready to purchase the defibrillator and Capel Bethania have agreed to pay for the electricity.
- They have requested that LICC become the custodians of the defibrillator, adding it to our portfolio of community defibrillators within Llannon Ward, so will transfer the cost of the defibrillator so we can purchase it.
- Calon Hearts have confirmed they will honour another grant.
- A plaque will be displayed in Councillor Williams' memory.
- I will also purchase a plaque in memory of Councillor Michael Jones to go on the defibrillator in Upper Tumble Public Cemetery.

AGENDA ITEM 11 – TO DISCUSS A REQUEST FROM CADW MYNYDD MAWR YN DACLUS REGARDING A DEFIBRILLATOR

DECISION REQUIRED



BT Kiosk – Heol Stores

- Following last month's meeting, I contacted Phase Connections to move the defibrillator on to the wall of Heol Stores in anticipation of the disconnection notice for the electricity supply. The owner of Phase Connections confirmed that he originally installed the defibrillator on behalf of LICC and he also installed the defibrillator in Llannon. He was instructed by the former Clerk who had reported to the Council that "Yogi Dai" completed the installation. The defibrillator was moved the following day and our thanks go to Phase Connections for their ongoing free support with the community defibrillators.
- I am still awaiting the disconnection notice, the kiosk will be removed as soon as we receive confirmation from BT.

Y Graig

- As part of our improvements to Y Graig, we need to cut the overgrown bracken. A quotation has been obtained from a qualified company to carry out the works by January for £850.
- The same company have provided a quotation to weed/wipe the area in the Spring when it starts to return for £450.

AGENDA ITEM 12 – TO DISCUSS A QUOTATION RECEIVED TO CARRY OUT MAINTENANCE WORKS ON THE BRACKEN COVERED HILLSIDE SECTION OF Y GRAIG

DECISION REQUIRED

New mower for Cross Hands Bowls Club

- Has been ordered and should be delivered this week

Communication

- I contacted the owner of Heol Stores following notification of planning consultation **PL/08324** and provided him with information regarding the application. I arranged an EGM for the Council to discuss the application and submitted the Council's objections to the Planning Department.
- Residents of Llannon have contacted me regarding the Coastal Housing Development and a meeting had been arranged.
- Christmas trees have been ordered and installation planned for w/c 18th November 2024. Switch on will be weekend of 22nd – 24th November.
- Remembrance Day Services - Information:

Sunday, 10th November 2024

Tumble

Church Service 10am – Dewi Sant

Tumble Memorial Garden 11am (please arrive at least five minutes before)



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Cross Hands Memorial Garden

2pm (please arrive at least five minutes before)

Followed by refreshments and cake in Cross Hands Workingman's Club

- **Autumn/Winter Newsletter**

I have written the draft newsletter; the English version has been forwarded to you. The Community Engagement, Well-being & Events Committee has agreed the content. Julie is currently translating the Welsh version. The Council needs to decide how it would like the newsletter to be distributed.

OPTION ONE (Requested by Cllr. Llinos Davies):

Published on website and social media

Hard copy distributed via Tumble Hall, Y Cwtsh, local shops and businesses

Approximate cost - £500

OPTION TWO:

Published on website and social media

Hard copy distributed via Tumble Hall and Y Cwtsh

Hard copy distributed to every household using Council staff and volunteers to deliver

Approximate cost - £1200

OPTION THREE

Published on website and social media

Hard copy distributed via Tumble Hall and Y Cwtsh

Hard copy distributed to every household using Royal Mail Dedicated Door Drop

Approximate cost - £2500

AGENDA ITEM 13 – TO DISCUSS THE DISTRIBUTION METHODS OF THE AUTUMN/WINTER COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

DECISION REQUIRED

People Management

- Following the Personnel and Full Council Meetings in September, all staff have now been issued with new contracts and Job Descriptions.
- National Pay Award increase backdated to 1st April 2024 was announced last week. All staff Point 43 and under will receive an increase of £1290 (pro-rata where relevant). Staff Point 44 and above will receive a 2.5% increase. This will be paid in November's pay.
- Real Living Wage has increased to £12.60 and will also be implemented from November.



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- Walford Williams officially retired on 11th October 2024. We announced Walford's retirement during Cinio a Chlonc and presented him with a retirement gift. I would like to thank Walford for all of his hard work, friendship and support. He will be missed by us all.

Personal Development

- Ffion & I have both completed the PIALC Qualification (Principles of Internal Auditing Local Councils Qualification).
- Ffion and I attended the SLCC Civility and Respect: Personal Resilience and Self-Protection webinar – 1st October.
- Ffion, Wendi and I attended the 3-day, SLCC Conference in Leicester - 7th – 10th October.
- Ffion and I attended the SLCC Civility & Respect – What makes people become challenging webinar – 15th October.
- Ffion and I attended the One Voice Wales Annual Conference in Builth Wells – 16th October.
- I attended The Senedd Local Government and Housing Committee roundtable event regarding the inquiry into role, governance and accountability of the community and town council sector – 23rd October.
- I attended the One Voice Wales seminar: Funding, grants & precept setting – 24th October.
- Ffion continues with her IICA to CiLCA qualification and I hope to complete the CiLCA qualification in the new year.

Mrs Clare Hope

Chief Officer (Proper Officer of Llannor Community Council)

30th October 2024