

Minutes of General Meeting held on 12th September 2024

Present: Cllrs

Allan Morgans – Chair
Jac Armstrong – Vice Chair
Paul Sheldon
Amanda Curtis
Lyn Gibson
Margaret Narburgh – Clerk

Apologies:

None

Members of the Public:

7 members of the public were present

Not Responded

HO Williams

Visitors:

Darren Millar AM

This was a face-to-face meeting with no requests to join by video link.

847. Apologies

None

848. Meeting Open to the Public

The Chair welcomed Darren Millar and invited members of the public to speak.

1. Mr Millar was asked about speeding along the A494 through Llanferres – see answer below.
2. Mr Millar was asked about the proposed new National Park - see answer below.
3. The Council was asked if it knew the outcome of the vote of no confidence in Denbighshire CC's leadership. Cllr Armstrong stated that it had not been passed and the matter had been reported in the local press.
4. A member of the public stated that the planning application for 1 Rock View Maeshafn had been approved.

849. Declarations of Interest

Cllr. Morgans declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Part II – complaint.

850. Welcome Darren Millar AM

Mr Millar thanked the Council for inviting him to the meeting and Councillors and the Clerk for their work within the community. Residents had submitted a number of questions for him in preparation for the meeting and he answered as follows:

1. **Speeding along the A494 through Llanferres.** He had been drawing attention for the need to reduce the speed limit for many years and although the Welsh Government had agreed to erect signs, paint road markings and install flashing speed warning signs to reduce the speeding issues, little progress was being made. GoSafe patrols were being carried out periodically but the results were not resulting in more rapid action to resolve matters. Ken Skates the Cabinet Secretary for transport has acknowledged that traffic along the road is too fast but recent correspondence suggests that he is awaiting the implementation of new guidance from the Welsh Government to ensure reducing the speed limit to 30mph is consistent with other villages but no time frame had been given. While the A494 is a trunk road, Denbighshire CC is responsible for speed limits on local roads.
2. **Proposed National Park.** Most people had expected it to cover roughly the same area as the current AONB and had been surprised at how large the proposed area in the NRW consultation. Opinion is divided with regards the need for a new National Park but Mr Millar is in favour of it going ahead because of the investment it will bring to the area through funding to improve existing amenities and the additional visitor spend in the local economy. He opposes the extended footprint and hopes that the new park boundaries will match that of the existing AONB.

3. **Big Covert woods Maeshafn.** Permitted development rights allow for land to be used for 28 days without planning permission but there has been recent discussion to this being extended to 56 days, which Mr Millar opposes. He expressed concern at the lack of enforcement in the Big Covert for unlawful developments. Registered footpaths cannot be blocked by landowners and DCC has the power to ensure they stay open. Upgrading definitive public footpath maps can take many years due to legal processes and challenges from owners. He suggested working with the Ramblers Association who have legal expertise, to support the registration of footpaths.

4. **Flooding at Pont y Mwynwr bridge Maeshafn.** Natural Resources Wales are responsible for managing flood risk and have effectively washed their hands of this issue stating that homeowners need to protect their own homes. They don't accept that engineering elsewhere upstream has caused the problem. Property owners may like to consider take legal advice, possibly through their home insurers if they can demonstrate that the flooding only occurred following the engineering works. Action: Cllr Morgans to speak to the owners.

5. **Difficulty in getting appointments to see the GP's.** Practices are duty bound to deliver services which includes patients with urgent medical needs being attended to within 24 hours. The service is under pressure due to the aging population, longer waiting times for hospital treatment, and recruitment challenges. Welsh Government is planning to increase GP's pay and is training more doctors. There will be additional places in medical school but with it taking 7 years to train doctors there will be a long time lag before the impact is seen. Attracting doctors to work in North Wales is difficult due to the reputation of the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board having been in special measures for such a long time. There is a route map in place to get them out of special measures, but little seems to be improving and there are a lot of inconsistencies. A member of the public stated that they had recently received excellent emergency treatment from both their GP and Wrexham hospital recently. The NHS budget was the only budget in the UK to be cut as a result of Welsh Government decisions some years ago and the deterioration in services and longer waiting times can be tracked back to this.

6. **Funding for schools.** Mr Millar understands the challenges having been a school governor himself for many years. His view is that Denbighshire CC have wrongly prioritised other services above schools, the £22 million spent on the new household waste collection system being one example which is costing more than the old system. The ballot box is the means by which local councillors can be held to account for their decisions.

7. **Council Tax Increases.** There is a cap of what Councils can charge in England, with any increases above this level requiring a referendum. Unfortunately, no such limits or rules about referendums apply in Wales. He is pushing for this to change but acknowledged that this is unlikely to happen. It is understood that there are proposals for a further 9% increase for 2025-26. Mr Millar expressed concerns about the potential for local residents to suffer from even bigger rises due to proposals to re-band of properties in Wales and that some council tax discounts could be scrapped. There is

already a North/South divide with councils getting better funding settlements in South Wales than the North.

Mr Millar invited members of the Council and the public to visit the Senedd. The Chair thanked him for attending the meeting and his frank although not very encouraging answers.

851. Approval of Minutes of Meeting held on 11th July 2024

Cllr Sheldon proposed they be accepted as a true record of the meeting, Cllr Gibson seconded and Cllrs Morgans and Armstrong voted in favour. Cllr Curtis abstained due to not having been at the meeting. There were no votes against and the motion was carried.

852. Matters Arising from Meeting on 11th July 2024

827.2	Still no response received from Adam Turner re the buildings in Big Covert.
834	Completed 12.7.24
837.1	Completed 12.7.24
837.6	Completed 13.7.24
837.10	Completed 12.7.24
838	Completed 12.7.24
839	Completed 19.7.24
840	Completed 16.7.24
841	Improvement work for Maes Ysgawen park is ongoing
843	Completed 12.7.24
845.2	Completed 15.7.24

853. Correspondence List

1. LPFRA has thanked the Council for the grant to pay its insurance premium.
2. The Chair has responded to North Wales Police asking for view on policing in the area to say there is a lack of visibility of policing.
3. Denbighshire CC are planning to close 50% of public toilets and have asked for residents views.
4. Audit Wales have sent a breakdown of the invoices for 2020-21 and 2021-22 but still not responded to the complaint submitted in July.
5. Councillors have been invited to attend the One Voice Wales national video conference on 20th November. Action: Clerk to book for Cllr Morgans to attend.
6. Darren Millar AM sent a letter of support for Maes Ysgawen park improvements.
7. Aubergine have confirmed they will upgrade the Council website at the end of September before new legislation comes into effect in October.
8. The Tree Impact report had been received and sent to Harrisons for inclusion in the planning application for Maes Ysgawen park.
9. A letter from Ken Skates sent to Darren Millar re speeding along the A494 had been circulated.
10. Audit Wales are chasing payment of 2 invoices.
11. Details of the new school admissions system have been circulated to residents.
12. Jason McKlellan, leader of DCC sent a letter of support for Maes Ysgawen park improvements.
13. The Clerk reported that on 29th August there was £210.01 in the current account and £24,170.56 in the savings account which included the second precept payment of £6,320.

854. Big Covert

The Chair stated he had still not had a response from Adam Turner regarding the recent building work in Big Covert. After discussion Cllr Armstrong suggested sending him a reminder and if nothing was forthcoming after 14 days writing to the head of planning and copying the head of DCC. Action: Cllr Morgans to chase.

855. Planning Applications

1. 21/2024/1153/HH – 1 Rock View Maeshafn
This application was approved earlier today so it is too late to respond.
2. 21/2024/1235/PS – Loggerheads Country Park
After due discussion Councillors agreed to support this application. Action: Clerk to notify planning.
3. 21/2024/1268/PS – Aberduna Farm
After due discussion Councillors agreed to support this application. Action: Clerk to notify planning.

856. Denbighshire CC Budget

The Clerk reported that she and the Chair had attended DCC's budget meeting on 17th July. The County is in financial crisis and looking to reduce costs by £8million equivalent to 3% through transferring responsibility for some of the services it provides to town and community councils. This will not effect Llanferres CC

because it is already maintaining the parks and open spaces it owns and there are none of the other services in its' area.

857. Maes Ysgawen Park Update

The Clerk reported that the project had grown into something much bigger than anyone had really wanted and that progress was taking much longer than expected due to having to apply for planning permission. The Ecology report should be available early next week and Harrisons are on standby to submit the application before the end of September when all the documentation should be complete. Costs are still within budget but the project is proving harder to coordinate than had been foreseen.

Cllr Morgans stated that there had been a park sub-committee meeting on 10th September when it was agreed to wait for the planning decision before deciding how best to proceed. Action: Clerk to report on progress at the next meeting.

858. Armistice Day

Cllr Morgans reported that the remembrance service is on Sunday 10th November and that he would check arrangements with the vicar. The Clerk stated that she had recycled last year's poppy wreaths, that they were in good condition and asked if the Council wanted to consider a donation to the British Legion. Cllr Morgans proposed donating £60, Cllr Armstrong seconded and Cllrs Sheldon, Gibson and Curtis voted in favour. Action: Clerk to arrange payment.

859. Internet Banking Check

Cllr Sheldon stated that he had checked the bank statements against the internet banking and accounts for July and August 2024 and the transactions were all correct.

860. Audit Wales Invoices

A breakdown of the 2 invoices had been received but there is still no response to the other matters raised in the complaint. The number of hours spent on both audits seems excessive and may be challenged depending on the response to the complaint. The Clerk has asked Darren Millar to raise the performance of the audit office in the Senedd. Cllr Morgans proposed still withholding payment until they responded, Cllr Curtis seconded and Cllrs Armstrong, Sheldon and Gibson voted in favour. There were no abstentions or votes against. Action: Clerk to notify Audit Wales and request an urgent response to the complaint.

861. Payment of Bills and Invoices

The following bills were presented for authorisation to pay.

From	For	Amount
AVOW - Wrexham	Payroll for September 2024	£542.30
HSBC	Bank charges July 2024	£5.00
HSBC	Bank charges August 2024	£5.00
Welsh Water	Water bill millennium fountain	£16.09
Tesco	2 x A4 paper	£9.50
Defibstore	2 x Zoll defibrillator pads	£288.00
Lawn Order	Late summer treatment Maeshafn village green	£40.00
Audit Wales	2020/21 Audit fees	£5,431.00
Audit Wales	2021/22 Audit fees	£2,037.00
British Legion	Poppy wreaths for remembrance day	£60.00
** Tree Solutions	Tree Impact report - Maes Ysgawen planning application	£1,740.00
** Harrisons	Costs associated with preparing planning application	£2,490.00
** Harrisons	Balance of cost for revisions to concept drawings	£450.00
** RML Consul	Ecological survey Maes Ysgawen planning application	£1,866.00
Total Bills to Pay		£14,979.89

**** Expenditure to be reclaimed from National Lottery grant for Maes Ysgawen park improvements**

The Clerk reported that she had claimed the lottery grant and submitted a claim to HMRC to refund the VAT, and that the money for both had arrived in the bank earlier today.

Cllr Morgans proposed paying all bills with the exception of the two from Audit Wales, Cllr Sheldon seconded, and Cllrs Armstrong, Gibson and Curtis voted in favour. There were no abstentions or votes against and the motion was carried. Action: Clerk to pay those bills authorised for payment.

862. Other Matters brought to the Council's Attention

1. The Chair had been asked by 3 residents if there had been any news on Burley Hill quarry re-opening. When he last asked the Minerals Officer, he was told there were no resources to progress this and DCC had prioritised complaints from residents to extend another quarry in the area over this.
2. The Clerk had received an email from a resident asking to speak to someone following an encounter with a group of people carrying guns on the footpath leading up to Moel Famau. Details of who to contact at DCC and Loggerheads Country park were sent and the resident has thanked the Council for its' help.
3. White Oak Properties had quoted £135.00 to undertake the annual maintenance of the noticeboards, bus shelters, culvert, telephone kiosks and strim the grass around Tafarn y Gelyn bench. Cllr Sheldon proposed accepting it, Cllr Armstrong seconded and Cllrs Morgans, Gibson and Curtis voted in favour. There were no abstentions or votes against and the motion was carried. Action: Clerk to arrange with the contractor.

Cllr Morgans thanked members of the public for their attendance and asked them to leave before moving onto Part II. He proposed closing the meeting, Cllr Gibson seconded and Cllrs Armstrong and Sheldon voted in favour.

The meeting was closed at 9.05 pm.

Cllr Morgans handed over the Chair of the meeting to Cllr Armstrong and left due to his personal and prejudicial interest in the Part II discussion.

863. Part II

Councillors discussed the complaint received from a member of the public and agreed the Councils response.

Cllr Armstrong proposed closing the meeting, Cllr Sheldon seconded and Cllrs Gibson and Curtis voted in favour. The meeting was closed at 9.30 pm.

The next General Meeting of the Council will be held on Thursday 10th October 2024 at 7.30 pm in Llanferres Village Hall and by TEAMS video conferencing