

WELSHPOOL TOWN COUNCIL



NOTES OF THE PUBLIC MEETING HELD AT WELSHPOOL TOWN HALL ON Tuesday 22nd November 2016 at 7pm

Present were:

Welshpool Town Council

Cllr S Kaye (Mayor), Cllr H Evans (Deputy Mayor), Cllr E Bleivas, Cllr A Bowen, Cllr G Breeze, Cllr B McWhinnie, Cllr P Pritchard, Cllr H Sherlock, Cllr S Squibb and Robert Robinson (Town Clerk).

Powys County Council

Cllr J Powell (Cabinet Member), Nigel Brinn and Ashley Collins.

Other

123 members of the public. (both from Welshpool and the surrounding area)

Introduction

The Mayor Cllr Stephen Kaye opened the meeting and welcomed all in attendance. The panel was asked to introduce themselves to the meeting.

Town Street Scene

The Town Clerk gave a short update on the Street Scene recently taken over by Welshpool Town Council on 1st November 2016. There is a lot of work playing catch up before general maintenance can be moved onto. The worst areas are being sorted first – for example the footpath from the Library to Red Bank was cleared on this day.

Powys County Council

Powys County Council have a presentation setting out budget constraints and the proposals for recycling in Powys and in particular in Montgomeryshire.

The saving that has to be made for the next financial year is £700,000. There were various options put forward as to how savings could be made which are listed here.

The options

The options presented were:

Proposal

To carry out a full consultation on the following options:

Option 1 – Reduce opening days at all sites to three per week to include Saturday, Sunday and one weekday – potential savings of up to £140k (£28k per site).

Option 2 – Close one HWRC, either one in Montgomeryshire or one in Brecknockshire – potential savings of up to £350k.

Option 3 – Close one HWRCs and reduce opening days at the remaining sites – potential saving of up to £462k.

Option 4 – Close two HWRCs to leave one in each shire – potential savings of up to £700k.

Option 5 – Close two HWRCs and reduce opening days at the remaining sites – potential saving of up to £784k.

There is also the potential to charge for some wastes that are not classed as household, such as soil and rubble, plasterboard, and other DIY waste. This could potentially save up to £50,000 if introduced at all sites.

Subjects raised during the meeting

The following subjects were raised with Powys County Council:

i) Cllr Graham Breeze (Town Councillor)

The following questions were put to the panel by Graham Breeze:

Consultation

Why are the County Council holding a worthless consultation when they have already made up their minds as to what they are going to do – see note below.

NOTE: The minute referred to is from Cabinet Meeting held on 1st November 2016.

No 12 on the delegated decision list as follows:

October Portfolio Holder for Property Buildings

Housing Portfolio Holder for Finance

Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability

Approval to acquire the freehold of a site for a Household Waste Recycling Centre in Newtown.

General points

Recycling centres are not a luxury but an essential service.

There is a moral obligation if not a legal obligation.

Fly tipping will increase, it has already increased due to 3 weekly bin collection.

Welshpool is not willing to accept any reductions at all.

Why hold a consultation when the decision has already been made.

ii) Richard Church

The following questions were put to the panel by Richard Church:

A petition of 2000 signatures is ready to be presented to John Powell.

Online survey is not prepared well and does not give people a chance to really say what they wish to.

There is more work to be done on cost savings, not sure they are really known yet.

Both the Newtown and Welshpool sites are very busy.

Resale of reusable items does a good service to those who need it.

The cost of setting up new sites will probably be more than any savings – it is appreciated they are separate budgets but that is not relevant.

iii) Ruth Canning

The following points were put to the panel by Ruth Canning:

Concerned about effect on small businesses including cost.

Has PCC consulted with other Principle Authorities to gain best ideas.

iv) Cllr Estelle Bleivas (Town Councillor)

The following questions were put to the panel by Estelle:

Graphs and pretty pictures in presentation mean nothing.

Removed bins from Berriew Street car park due to rats. Pest control not on Powys agenda.

Residents have been putting down rat poison to solve issue which PCC should have addressed.

Cuts should start at the top and work down. Too many administrators and managers at County Hall.

v) Cllr Brendan McWhinnie (Town Councillor)

The following points were put to the panel by Brendan McWhinnie

Thanked the panel for coming this evening.

Not impressed that the questions have been answered at all well.

Cont...

Need to address concerns not just 'take them on board'.

Consultants cost high – will we find more consultants for recycling set ups.

Community suggestions should be considered.

More detailed answers needed – not more detail on education or social services which is not a subject for tonight.

More clarity on the site at Abermule and the purchase of land as noted earlier in this paper.

Clarity in the budget information needed.

Welsh Government needs to be involved.:

vi) Cllr Philip Pritchard (Town and County Councillor)

The following points were put to the panel by Phil Pritchard.

Answers do not give clear concise information.

Only 9 Cabinet members making these decisions.

All ratepayers in hall, they should have a proper say in how their money is spent.

No one here wants to see the proposals proceed, the message is that you have got it wrong.

Need to look at waste management – staffing levels and how it is done.

Balanced budget understood but there must be savings from elsewhere.

Too many levels of management.

vii) Cllr Francesca Jump County Councillor)

The following points were put to the panel by Francesca Jump:

Some areas charge £1 a bag for garden waste, would this not help.

It is understood that garden waste going straight to landfill.

PCC needs to consider carefully their position and keep Welshpool's centre open.

viii) Nicola Morris

The following points were put to the panel by Nicola:

Concern over cost of fly tipping – if this increases no doubt Welshpool Town Council will have to pick up the cost.

Fly tipping does happen in Welshpool now – Powys has just not been clearing it up.

Understand need for cuts but and not convinced that recycling is one that should be taken forward before many others.

ix) Folkert Veenstra

The following points were put to the panel by Folkert:

Asked PCC to reconsider their position.

The effect on local residents is not acceptable.

x) Other members of the public

The following points were put by members of the public:

If we need to save money where does the investment money come from?

Recycling should be encouraged not made more difficult.

3 weekly bin collections not good enough.

Recycling of garden waste a main issue.

Suggest final decision should be made by Full Council and not just Cabinet.

Concern over the indications that a decision has already been made.

All figures need to be given with clarity – income and outgoings for each site.

Many of the above comments were made by more than one person.

xi) Cllr Stephen Kaye Mayor of Welshpool

Steve Kaye suggested that perhaps the County Council should march on Cardiff with the public behind them to get a better settlement for Powys. Yet again Mid Wales has been forgotten.

Perhaps the County Council should consider the amount spent on Local Authority Pensions – far too much luxurious.

Not sure PCC has convinced the people in this hall that you 'have a clue what you are doing'.

xii) Mr Sinden (made points and then left the meeting in style)

The following points were put by Mr Sinden.

Understand the need to find £700,000 but am sure a little can be taken from each area rather than hit one central to daily life.

We can all make savings in small areas if needed in any activity.

Do we tender the sites to get best value.

Just look around you and you can see where you can save.

It was an impassioned plea to common sense.

xiii) Gillian from Llanfair Caereinion

The following points were put by Gillian:

Consultation is online, we can get copy from our local library, which you are planning to close in Llanfair.

Thank you Welshpool Town Council for putting this meeting on which is not just for Welshpool but the Communities around Welshpool as well.

Very few questions answered this evening.

Full details need to be given so we can make informed suggestions.

Concerned about evidence which shows decision has already been made.

PCC need to get a better settlement from Welsh Government.

Make a cut to Councillors receipts instead of cutting public services.

Need to consider other effects, if 60 mile round trip to go to a centre – not going to happen.

xiv) Tony Harvey

The following points were put to the panel by Tony Harvey:

It appears the decision has already been made. If you cannot produce the financial figures clearly it suggests that PCC is not competent to financially manage anything.

xv) Town Clerk

The Town Clerk pointed out the meeting several factual matters:

- a) The Town Council staff do not benefit from the giant Local Authority Scheme and are all on a business based scheme.
- b) The services taken over to date from Powys County Council are running at approx. 50% of the cost before handover.
- c) The Town Council would like anyone who sees fly tipping or rubbish left around to report it to them so that it can be cleared asap.

Responses from Powys County Council

The following responses to the public questions were given as follows:

- a) A decision has not yet been made.
- b) When the consultation is completed then a report will be given to Cabinet to consider.
- c) The Council are looking to purchase sites for both Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC) and a bulking centre for the kerbside vehicles. This is to ensure the long term security of the waste and recycling service as the Council is currently reliant on privately owned sites.

- d) There has been no increase in fly tipping since the Machynlleth Site has closed.
- e) More recycling at kerbside is now taking place.
- f) 430 responses to survey to date. Urge people to complete it.
- g) PCC is looking at options for a garden waste collection service which is likely to be chargeable as per other authorities – however it is early stages and will not be in place for the time when any decision is made on the HWRC provision The garden waste banks at Community Recycling Sites (bring sites) will remain.
- h) Level of recycling is now at 66% for September with a forecast of 62% for 2016/17.
- i) Issues of size and scale of recycling sites has an effect on costs of running such centres.
- j) There is to be another 11 years of budget cuts.
- k) Private firms now deal with pest control and not PCC.
- l) Berriew Street issues were mainly due to fly tipping and improper use of the facility. The removal of this site was at the request of Welshpool Town Council and the local community.
- m) PCC does listen – it is difficult times – any ideas on how to reduce costs are welcome.
- n) PCC only uses consultants where needed – also offers consultancy to others bringing in approx. £2m per annum.
- o) Bottom line is that £700k per annum has to be found within this service delivery area.
- p) The sites currently being used for bulking recyclables at Trewern and Newtown both too small.
- q) Kerbside collections as at present are set to continue.
- r) Powys County Council does consult via working groups with other councils.
- s) There is just one manager for 160 staff in this service delivery area.
- t) There is a difference between capital and revenue spending. Revenue spending is the area which is being cut.
- u) £700k has been brought forward from next years budget to secure a site for an HWRC in Montgomeryshire.
- v) Pension costs are not an issue for PCC as they are decided nationally. However they are now being looked at.
- w) 50% cut in direct services budgets.
- x) PCC is constantly looking for savings.
- y) £10m needed to run new waste management services.
- z) £2.175m is the current cost of recycling centres on 5 sites.
- aa) PCC wants to secure its own sites to maximise the options available to operate them be that with a third party or in house.
- bb) There has been some extra money gained for rural areas from Welsh Government.

cc) Full Council has approved current budget cuts at its meeting in February 2016.

PCC did not answer the question – ‘is the Welshpool Potters recycling centre closing’.

Stop press

While PCC was discussing with the issues of cuts in recycling an email was received by Graham Breeze which was a press release by Cllr John Powell confirming further cuts in the service not mentioned at the meeting to date.

The hall then called for the resignation of Cllr John Powell.

The press release was for the removal of cans and plastics banks at Community Recycling Sites. It was explained to the meeting that this is simply a duplication as cans and plastics are now collected from all households as part of the kerbside service. Furthermore these banks are regularly contaminated meaning that the material often cannot be recycled.

What does Powys County Council do now?

The consultation will now proceed to a conclusion and report given to Cabinet for decision on the proposal to be adopted.

What is the Town Council to do now?

The Town Council is meeting with Powys County Council to start talks to seek a better way forward.

Teas and coffees were available before and after the meeting.

R A Robinson FRICS FILCM

Town Clerk

24.11.2016