

Date · Dyddiad 9 April 2019
Your ref · Eich cyfeirnod
My ref · Fy nghyfeirnod
Telephone · Ffôn 01437 77 5240
Email · Ebost mike.cavanagh@pembrokeshire.gov.uk

www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk
www.sir-benfro.gov.uk



Pembrokeshire County Council Cyngor Sir Penfro

IAN WESTLEY, M.A. B.Eng.(Hons), C.Eng., M.I.Mech.E., M.C.I.B.S.E.
Chief Executive / Prif Weithredwr

Dr. STEVEN JONES, B.A.(Hons), D.M.S., M.B.A., Ph.D., M.C.I.M.
Director of Community Services
Cyfarwyddwr Gwasanaethau Cymunedol

Pembrokeshire County Council,
County Hall, HAVERFORDWEST,
Pembrokeshire, SA61 1TP

Cyngor Sir Penfro,
Neuadd y Sir, HWLFFORDD,
Sir Benfro, SA61 1TP

Telephone / Ffôn 01437 764551
DX 98295 HAVERFORDWEST

Please ask for
Os gwelwch yn dda gofynnwch am
Mike Cavanagh

Dear Councillors

At its meeting of 19 December 2018, Haverfordwest Town Council considered a request for additional funding, relating to the Town Council's five-year financial support for Saturday afternoon opening of the new Glan yr Afon/Riverside facility in the town centre. Members requested that I return at a later date with more information before a decision could be made.

The intention of this letter is to provide an updated position on the facility and further information in order for a decision to be taken.

The Riverside facility has been a phenomenal success since opening on Friday, 7 December 2018. Below is a comparison of performance between the old library and the new facility:

	Dew Street library (December 1 2017 to March 31, 2018)	Riverside (December 7, 2018 to March 31, 2019)	Variance	Percentage variance
Visitors	16,331	101,949	85,618	524.27%
New members	170	2,166	1,996	1174.12%
Adult borrowing	12,938	22,745	9,807	75.80%
Junior borrowing	5,279	15,439	10,160	192.46%
Welsh language borrowing	330	1,213	883	267.58%
Health and well-being borrowing	543	1,322	779	143.46%

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Saturdays have been consistently our busiest day, both in terms of visitor numbers and book borrowing, as below:

	Mondays	Tuesdays	Wednesdays	Thursdays	Fridays	Saturdays
Visitors	15,591	13,818	15,506	14,910	19,460	22,664
% Visitors	15.3%	13.6%	15.2%	14.6%	19.1%	22.2%

	Mondays	Tuesdays	Wednesdays	Thursdays	Fridays	Saturdays
Issues	6,326	5,384	5,694	5,123	6,809	9,872
% Issues	16.1%	13.7%	14.5%	13.1%	17.4%	25.2%

One of the primary reasons for locating this facility in the heart of the town centre was for it to act as a boost to footfall and thus help with the regeneration of the town centre. I am thrilled to report that in December, footfall in the town centre was up by 10% on the previous December and footfall has been up on the previous year in January, February and March. This is based on information received from the Riverside shopping centre who do regular footfall counts. In their view, this increase is down to the new library and gallery facility as little else has changed.

This is extremely welcome news and evidences strongly that the facility is having a significant positive effect on the town. It also bodes really well for future additional interventions such as improvements to Haverfordwest Castle, and shows that adding high quality leisure opportunities to town centres is very much the way forward to address town centre decline in an era of online and out-of-town shopping preferences.

Members will no doubt be aware that we have had some antisocial behaviour issues to deal with, but I can reassure Members that this issue is being actively managed and reduced. Indeed, we have thrown the proverbial kitchen sink at the issue, including: providing bespoke training to our staff; increasing CCTV coverage; handing out bans; working with the police; youth services; Pembrokeshire College; and the local schools; installing a bin outside the back entrance to reduce littering, and employing a security officer to ensure that staff and customers can feel safe at all times.

It is likely that with improving weather, this issue will continue to reduce as some of the young people displaying these behaviours will go elsewhere. However, we are of the view that some modest physical layout changes should also be made and we are therefore considering removing the teenage area and replacing it with a quiet study space. This would also address a request made by some people for a bespoke quiet area.

You will appreciate that the costs associated with dealing with the antisocial behaviour were unexpected, and these have increased the financial pressure beyond the levels outlined in my letter of 19 December 2018.

I am mindful of some of the comments made by Members at the 19 December Town Council meeting when the issue of Saturday afternoon opening was discussed. As a result, I have made amendments to our request for additional financial support, which is outlined below. One of the points made in the meeting was that the Town Council's financial support was there to make a contribution towards Saturday afternoon opening as opposed to fully funding it. I can however confirm that the original intention and agreement was always about fully funding those hours, albeit at the time we estimated that would be £9,000 per year. Even so, I have now amended the

request such that it would represent a contribution rather than fully funding the costs associated with Saturday afternoon opening.

Another comment made in the meeting of 19 December was that we should have foreseen that we would need a senior library assistant role to assist the manager with managing the facility. Whilst I do not entirely agree that it is reasonable to foresee every future eventuality in an incredibly complex project, I have tried to take on board that point in the amended request by removing that cost element from the request.

In terms of the amended request then, a quick recap on the history of the original agreement may be helpful. When I originally wrote to the Town Council in September 2017, seeking financial support for Saturday afternoon opening, we were working on best estimates for what we anticipated the staffing levels and costs would be. Since opening, it has become clear that some of those assumptions were at variance with what we now know we need to operate effectively and safely. The sheer number of visitors is far in excess of what we expected, and this has put immense pressure on the staffing team. They are simply not getting enough time to do basic but vital tasks such as shelving and stock work due to the popularity of the venue.

In addition, completely outside of the Council's control, the National Joint Council for Local Government Services has agreed a national pay deal, which will significantly increase the pay of our lower paid staff, which includes our frontline librarians. Whilst this is very good news for the staff involved, it does have a financial implication on the costs of operating services, including at the Riverside.

As a result, we have calculated that there is a gap between the amount of funding that the Town Council has previously agreed to provide and the actual cost of delivering Saturday afternoon opening. However, in light of the comments made on 19 December 2018, I am not requesting that the Town Council fully funds all these pressures. However, I am respectfully requesting that the Town Council consider helping the Library Service by making an additional contribution over and above the already agreed £9,000 per year in order to enable the service to continue to deliver a six day per week operation. The increase requested would deal with the above inflationary staffing costs agreed by the National Joint Council for Local Government Services for which we have no control, together with a 50% contribution towards relief staffing costs that we are incurring. The other additional costs, such as the need for a senior library assistant, security officer and other related costs, would be dealt with by the Library Service.

The amended financial request is outlined below:

	Core staffing costs (exc senior library assistant and security officer costs)	50% of relief cover costs	Grand total
2019/20	£11,332	£1,010	£12,342
2020/21	£11,906	£1,044	£12,950
2021/22	£12,314	£1,078	£13,392
2022/23	£12,705	£1,111	£13,816
2023/24	£12,954	£1,133	£14,087
	£61,211	£5,376	£66,587 over 5 years

For ease of reference, I layout below the request that was made at the 19 December 2018 meeting:

	Total	Estimate of required relief cover	Grand total
2019/20	11,880.96	2,019.76	13,900.72
2020/21	12,284.48	2,088.36	14,372.84
2021/22	12,688.00	2,156.96	14,844.96
2022/23	13,068.64	2,221.67	15,290.31
2023/24	13,328.64	2,265.87	15,594.51
	£63,250.72	£10,752.62	£74,003.34 over 5 years

In addition, in line with our practice elsewhere in the county with town and community councils, and in line with my previous letter of 19 December 2018, we would offer a 10% discount if the Town Council are minded to continue to support Saturday afternoon opening on a five-year agreement basis. **That would reduce the cost by a further £6,659 leading to a total cost over five years of £59,928, which effectively means an uplift of £3,000 annually, from £9,000 per year to just under £12,000 per year.**

In the previous request made in December 2018, the five-year figure was £66,600 (after 10% discount on the £74,000 figure in the above table), which works out at 13,320 per year.

Hopefully, it is clear from the above that despite additional unanticipated costs that have occurred after the previous request (e.g. security officer costs), this new request is asking for a smaller uplift than the previous one. Nevertheless, I appreciate that it is still a request for additional funding.

I hope that the transparency outlined in this letter and level of detail given, provide sufficient information for Members to understand why we are asking for assistance with the costs of maintaining and sustaining what is clearly an exceptional facility that is good for the town.

With Best Wishes



Mike Cavanagh
Head of Cultural, Leisure, Tourism and Registration Services