

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF FULL COUNCIL
held on 25 January 2024 at 6pm in the Old Wool Market and via video conference

Present	Cllr J Owens Cllr M Lewis Cllr C Black Cllr J Brady Cllr J Hackett Cllr K Jones Cllr H Lewis Cllr P Lewis Cllr T Moses Cllr S Pearce Cllr B Simister Cllr R Thomas Cllr R Thomas Turner	Chairman / Mayor Vice Chairman / Deputy Mayor
In attendance	V Lewis Camacho	Town Clerk
Observers	Members of the public	

2478 Apologies

Apologies for absence were noted from Cllr A Brooker.

2479 Declarations of Interest from Members

<i>Agenda Item</i>	<i>Member</i>	<i>Interest</i>	<i>Nature of interest</i>
No declarations made			

2480 Questions from Members of the Public

There were no questions from the public.

2481 Minutes of previous meeting

a) Full Council meeting held on 21 December 2023

The minutes were accepted as a true record.

b) Updates on the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 21 December 2023

Minute No. 2463 – Staffing Matters

- i) The invoice in respect of the Community Garden sign had been received from Cllr A Brooker.
- ii) The Sheriff's Robes and Chain had not been returned to Old Wool Market by Cllr A Brooker.

Minute No. 2474 - 2024-25 Budget

Cllr P Lewis proposed that the 2024-25 Budget and Precept decision that:

“The 2024-25 Budget be approved in readiness for the Precept to be submitted to PCC, if possible, before 31 December 2023” be rescinded as further information integral to the decision had subsequently been received; and that further consideration and approval of the 2024-25 Budget and Precept be subject to a Special Meeting of Full Council. This was seconded by Cllr J Owens noting that the PCC tax rate had been received after the Full Council meeting held on 21 December 2023; and further progress with updating the information in the Edge Accounting system by the accountant had been made during January and so it was appropriate for Council to revisit the 2024-25 Budget and Precept discussion in light of this additional information.

Cllr J Owens then amended the proposal to 1) the draft 2024-25 Budget and Precept be reviewed by a working group comprising herself (Mayor), Cllrs H Lewis (PPF Chair), P Lewis and R Thomas, and the Clerk; 2) the revised Budget and Precept proposal is then brought before a Special meeting of the Full Council; and 3) that the Clerk to submit a precept extension request to PCC. This was seconded by Cllr R Thomas-Turner. All voted in favour of the proposal and to rescinding the decision in the 21 December 2023 Full Council meeting minutes.

Resolved: **Minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 21 December 2023 were accepted as a true record. Minute 2474 – 2024-25 Budget decision is rescinded.**

Resolved: **The Draft 2024-25 Budget and Precept is reviewed, in light of additional information becoming available, by a working group comprising the Mayor, PPF Chair, Cllrs P Lewis and R Thomas and the Clerk, prior to consideration and approval at a Special meeting of Full Council.**

Resolved: **The Clerk to submit a precept extension request to PCC.**

2482 Mayor's correspondence and updates

- a) Mayor noted her attendance at Ocky White Travel 60th Year Celebration supported by Pure West Radio on 6 January and the One Voice Wales (OVW) Pembrokeshire Area Committee meeting, attended by other area councillors, held on 10 January.
- b) Mayor commended Cllr R Thomas-Turner for organising the Councillor Surgery for Castle Ward on 11 January, which had been well received by members of the public. She suggested that thought is given to reinstating the former "Town Team" made up of town and county councillors and other 'multi-agency' representatives in the town which worked well. Cllr P Lewis noted the "4Cs Initiative" established before the Town Team which he and Cllr R Thomas were involved with which brought a number of positive initiatives to the town at the time including a flag and the illumination of the Castle, and the introduction of market stalls. Cllr R Thomas-Turner hoped that part 2 of the OVW Engagement training module, would provide tools and techniques for future surgeries and engagement with the public by Council.
- c) Mayor noted that the Secretary of the Twinnings Association had issued notice of the AGM to be held at 6.30 p.m. on 23 February 2024 at Haverfordwest Cricket Club.

2483 Planning Applications

Council noted the new applications received since the date of last meeting on 21 December 2023:

Ref No: 23/0767/PA	Proposed change of use of former fuel storage depot land for siting of 40, 6m x 2.4m storage containers for storage hire purposes
Ward: Priory	Former Fuel Depot, Cartlett, Haverfordwest, SA61 2LH
Resolved:	No objections by Council
Ref No: 22/0868/PA	Conversion and extension (with partial demolition) to provide new visitor attraction facilities containing space for ticketing and orientation, exhibition, education centre, cafe and shop and associated works (AMENDED PLANS)
Ward: Castle	Former county archive facility adjacent to Haverfordwest Castle, Haverfordwest Castle, Haverfordwest, SA61 2EW

Resolved:	No objections by Council
Ref No: 23/0775/PA	Change of use from commercial to residential
Ward: Castle	34, High Street, Haverfordwest, SA61 2DA
Resolved:	No objections by Council
Ref No: 23/0848/PA	Erection of boundary fences and gates
Ward: Prendergast	Pembrokeshire County Council, 1, Cherry Grove, Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire, SA61 2NZ
Resolved:	No objections by Council

Council noted the Planning Decisions received since the date of last meeting on 21 December 2023:

Ref No: 23/0685/PA	Conversion of a garage to an annexe with extension
Ward: Portfield	60, Haven Park Drive, Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire, SA61 1DW
Notification of Planning Decision	Conditionally approved on 19 December 2023

Ref No: 23/0706/PA	Change of use of the ground floor accommodation from commercial/shop (class A1) to a single bed residential flat (use class C3)
Ward: Portfield	3, North Street, Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire, SA61 2JE
Notification of Planning Decision	Conditionally Approved on 21 December 2023

Ref No: 23/0588/PA	Secure storage compound with containers to house telecoms infrastructure equipment
Ward: Portfield	T-mobile Site, Hawthorn Rise, Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire, SA61 2AY
Notification of Planning Decision	Conditionally Approved on 4 January 2024

2484 Committee Minutes

Resolved: To confirm the minutes as a true record and accept the recommendations of the Management, Estates and Strategy Committee meeting held on 9 January 2024 (attached hereto as Appendix 1). All voted in favour.

Resolved: 1) To confirm the minutes as a true record and accept the recommendations of the Personnel, Policy and Finance (PPF) Committee meeting held on 11 January 2024 (attached hereto as Appendix 2); and

2) Per Full Council Minute 2481 above, the corresponding PPF minute and recommendation to Full Council for the 2024-25 Precept request to be submitted to Pembrokeshire County Council is rescinded. All voted in favour.

2485 Terrence Higgins Trust Memorial Garden

Cllr J Owens outlined the approach received from the Trust, a British charity that plays a crucial role in addressing various issues related to HIV, for Council to establish a Memorial Garden in Haverfordwest, the place of Birth of one of its founders, the late Terrence Higgins. The cost of the project to transfer the garden after the conclusion of the Chelsea Flower Show (May 2024) would be borne by the Trust, albeit the ongoing maintenance costs of the garden needed to be determined. After a full discussion by Council, which included the suggestion of some potential sites to locate the garden (The Parade, Jury Lane, possibly around the Castle grounds), Council concluded that this was a fantastic opportunity for the town and that the Trust should be informed that Council accept the invitation, subject to identifying an appropriate site for the garden. Some concern was expressed about the security of the garden in more central locations. Cllr R Thomas proposed, and Cllr R Thomas-Turner seconded, a motion that Council respond to the Trust to accept the invitation and to work with PCC to identify an appropriate site prior to inviting Trust representatives to visit preferred location in Haverfordwest.

Resolved:

Accept invitation from the Terrence Higgins Trust to establish a Memorial Garden in Haverfordwest subject to agreeing an appropriate location, working with PCC.

2486 Priory Saltings - Risk Assessment

Cllr J Owens noted that a Risk Assessment had been undertaken by way of new information to support Council's further consideration whether to reopen the site. Cllr T Moses had performed the Risk Assessment while visiting the site with the Clerk and Peter Howe from PCC, and this contained some recommendations for improvement. He noted that the boardwalk, which had been destroyed by fire in an act of vandalism in October, had left the area muddy was deemed low risk and not a hazard. Despite no entry signs and the fencing Council had put up, it was noted that the public continued to use the site in any event. Cllr Moses recommended that by making a few low cost improvements, including adding signage at both entrances making the wild nature of the site very clear to anyone entering that access is at their own risk; by adding more stone hardcore to the steps and adjusting one of the bottom risers which was slightly inconsistent in depth to the other steps; and adding sufficient hardcore to the area where the board walk was located (potentially in conjunction with PCC project looking at doing this along the route from the board walk through to the Priory ruins which was susceptible to flooding), Council could re-open the site.

Cllr P Lewis challenged the earlier Risk Assessment (2021) which had recommended a handrail is fitted to the steps. He also felt that if the board walk area was made safe, he would not oppose re-opening the site. Cllr Moses confirmed that the handrail was a suggested improvement at the time but like the board walk was low risk and not deemed necessary. The worst injury a member of the public could sustain in the muddy section would be a twisted ankle. Cllr C Black noted that the definition of 'safe' is viewed differently by individuals based on any number of factors when entering a nature area like the Saltings. Cllr S Pearce confirmed his experience where dog walkers and other users are usually suitably dressed when entering the area fitting of the terrain.

Cllr J Owens suggested that the Risk Assessment carried out Cllr Moses, who was suitably qualified to do so, be accepted and that common sense is applied to the current situation with the Saltings. Cllr P Lewis noted his objection to re-opening the site unless the proposed improvements are carried out and requested a recorded vote. Cllr M Lewis then proposed to keep the site closed while the Clerk checks with the Council's insurers if the proposed improvements under the latest Risk Assessment are adequate. If they are not, then insurers should be asked what Council would need to do to remedy this. If insurers confirm the improvements are adequate then he suggested putting up the proposed signage and adopt a common-sense approach to get the site re-opened, working with our partners to implement the other improvements as soon as possible. This was seconded by Cllr B Simister.

Resolved:

1) Clerk to speak with insurers about adequacy of Risk Assessment – if OK, move to add signage at

both entrances to re-open the site. 2) If not adequate, establish what needs to be done to re-open it. 3) Finally, get to work with our partners with a view to re-opening the site as soon as possible. All voted in favour.

2487 Community Garden – Lottery Funding Completion Report

Council had been provided with a copy of the Completion report and expenses claim evidencing the expenditure against the £49,700 lottery funding offer received. A total of £48,921.61 (or £45,766.91 (net) was being claimed. Subject to Council approval, the report and claim would be submitted to the Heritage Lottery. However, the Clerk noted one issue before the report could be finalised which related to one expense over £10,000 which must be evidenced by Council meeting approval. Only one expense exceeds this amount in relation to the supply of the raised beds. Evidence was found where Council approved another supplier (referred to as “4B”) with no information as to which quote 4B referred to) so it may be that the arrangement with this supplier did not proceed and subsequently the supplier (Clerk named in the report) who provided the raised beds agreed to do the work. The quote from the first supplier, which was approved, was for less than the second supplier. Cllrs B Simister and T Moses recalled the difficulty at the time sourcing a supplier who would make the raised beds and that the initial supplier (4B) was for the supply of timber only, which explained why the second supplier’s quote was greater because this covered the total cost for providing the raised beds, which again Cllrs Simister and Moses recalled being approved at a meeting. The Clerk asked for any final comments on the report from any Councillors involved in the project prior to it being approved/submitted to Heritage Lottery.

Resolved: **Completion Report and Expenses Claim evidencing Lottery Funding is approved for submission to Heritage Lottery.**

2488 Outside Bodies – Appointments and updates

Bridge Meadow Trust Haverfordwest	Clerk to review status as no meetings held in 2023
Cleddau Reaches Project	Cllr P Lewis to fill vacancy on behalf of Bridge Meadow Trust. Clerk to advise PCC.
CWBR Youth Project (and all other youth projects) / Youth Forum	Cllr T Moses: next meeting on 30 January Cllr R Thomas-Turner to liaise with Cllr Moses
Haverfordwest Skate Park	Cllr T Moses to suggest grant application is made to Council to help support floodlighting costs
Haverfordwest Pool Trust	Cllr B Simister: next meeting scheduled in March (County Hall)
One Voice Wales – Pembs Area Committee	Cllr J Owens: next meeting being hosted at Old Wool Market on 7 April
PCC – Working Better Together Seminars	Cllrs T Mose/J Owens and Clerk attended Zoom call on 23 January – Focus on digital and replacement of legacy webpages provided to some town/community parish councils
Portfield Recreation Committee (PRC)	Cllr P Lewis: Next meeting on 5 February
Sir John Perrot / William Vawer Trust(s)	Cllr J Owens: Meetings postponed to 1 February
Haverfordwest Town Museum	Cllr P Lewis: Pop up Museum at Riverside – opening by Mayor on 28 March. Meetings held.
Town Team	Cllr R Thomas-Turner to establish if this forum can be re-formed
Twinning Association	Cllr J Owens: AGM is being held on 6 February

Resolved: **Appointments and updates to Outside Bodies were accepted. Clerk to create a template for Councillors to provide and return updates to the Clerk.**

2489 Expenditure for Payment

All voted in favour of approving the accounts for payment in January 2024 totalling £23,245.06 (inclusive of VAT)

Resolved: January 2024 payments totalling £23,245.06 including VAT were approved for payment.

Resolved: Expenditure (£92.82) relating to Floodlighting at Caretaker's Lodge, Haverfordwest Castle, which Council had handed back lease to PCC in April 2023 to be followed up / recovered from PCC (Mike Cavanagh).

Resolved: Fencing erected in front of the wall to be repaired at St Martin's Cemetery to be taken down and off hire.

2490 Items for next agenda

No new items.

2491 Staffing Matters

All voted in favour of exercising the PUBLIC BODIES ADMISSION TO MEETINGS) ACT 1960.

Resolved: That as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting

Members of the public left the meeting at 8.05 pm

Resolved: Notice period of staff member (who had served notice on the Council to leave employment) to be reduced to 4 weeks.

With no further business to consider, the meeting ended at 8.17 pm.

Chairman of Council / Mayor **Signed**

Proper Officer / Town Clerk **Signed**

Date

APPENDIX 1

Minutes of the hybrid meeting of the Management, Estates and Strategy (MES) Committee held on Tuesday 9 January 2024 at 6pm in the Old Wool Market

Present	Cllr B Simister	MES Committee Chairman
	Cllr J Owens	Chairman of Council / Mayor - Ex-officio
	Cllr C Black	
	Cllr P Lewis	
	Cllr S Pearce	MES Committee Vice-Chairman
	Cllr R Thomas-Turner	
	Cllr T Moses	
	Vanessa Lewis Camacho	Town Clerk
	Peter Phillips	Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service (MAWWFRS) (Agenda Item 3 only)
Apologies	None, except Councillors who are observers (see below)	
Observers	Cllr R Thomas Member of the public	

Cllr B Simister welcomed everyone to the meeting. Council Members who normally attended as observers and who had sent their apologies included Cllr(s) John Hackett, Kevin Jones, and Helen and Martin Lewis.

Declarations of interest from Members

Agenda Item	Member	Interest	Nature of interest
No declarations made			

MAWWFRS – Community Risk Management Plan (the Plan)

Peter Phillips introduced himself and the Plan by way of a brief slide presentation pack, a copy of which had been circulated prior to the meeting and will be attached to these minutes for reference. Mr Phillips noted the purpose of attending the meeting with Council was to engage on the draft Plan and to receive feedback on the draft Improvement and Well-being Objectives by close on Monday 15 January 2024. The Clerk agreed to circulate the link to provide feedback to Council members. The results of the feedback would be included in an updated Plan to be presented to the Fire Authority in March for approval, prior to publication on the MAWWFRS website in March 2024. The Committee thanked Mr Phillips for taking the time to meet with Council and he left the meeting.

Matters arising from minutes of the last meeting held on 5 December 2023

Christmas Lights Sub-Committee – the Clerk is arranging dates for meetings for this and other Sub-committees and Task and Finish Groups (T&FGs).

Lower Prendergast Cemetery – the Clerk advised that the original survey for the wall repair had not been located. Cllr P Lewis advised that 3 payments of £17k had been paid at the time of the repair work which might help identify the provider of the survey. The Clerk to follow up.

The Priory Saltings – Council discussed the lease for the site with Pembrokeshire County Council, a copy of which had been circulated in advance of the meeting. Cllr Tom Moses noted he had spoken with Peter Howe, PCC Green Infrastructure Officer, in relation to the Cleddau Reaches Project, with which the Saltings had been developed in partnership with, in relation to a number of “Phase 2” plans and potential for external funding. Cllr Moses suggested that the Risk Assessment for the site completed in 2021 is redone for Council to consider an action plan for the site, which Council had voted on to close following the arson event which destroyed the board walk between the Saltings and Priory ruins in November 2023 and concerns by some Council members about the safety of the steps leading down to the board walk. It was noted that the public were ignoring the no entry signs and fencing which had been erected by Council

and were continuing to access the site. As a short-term measure, Cllr Moses suggested just fencing off the steps and board walk not to deny access to what is a good amenity in the town for the public to use. The Committee discussed aspects of ongoing development of the site, recognising its restrictions as a former tip, in partnership with volunteer organisations including Pembrokeshire College by updating the last (2022-23) Action Plan. Cllr Peter Lewis noted that the Committee could not change the decision already made by Council which had been to close the site pending the resolution of concerns over public safety in relation to the steps and now muddy area where the board walk was located. Cllr Tom Moses suggested that any further decision by Council to not re-open the site (or parts of it) should be based on an updated Risk Assessment. Cllr Tom Moses proposed the following recommendation to Full Council which was seconded by Cllr Randell Thomas-Turner. Other members present voted in favour.

Recommendation:	Risk Assessment on Priory Saltings to be brought to the Full Council meeting on 25 January 2024 for Council to consider next steps in relation to the site.
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Picton Centre – the Clerk noted the progress made through direct contact with the PCC Legal team to resolve outstanding matters which had caused the delay to the signing of the lease of the Picton Centre between Council (as Landlord) and PCC (as Tenant). Subject to a few points on the draft lease which PCC had come back on, it was felt that the matter was closer to a resolution and that the monies due to Council since PCC's Youth Services Team had taken up occupancy on 1 April 2022, which had been permitted under an agreed Heads of Terms arrangement, would be settled. Meanwhile Council had been incurring some additional maintenance costs which PCC/Youth Services are aware of will be recharged.

Update on matters relating to:

a) Overview of Management of Council land and properties

The Clerk had updated this document detailing the management of the Council's properties in preparation for updating the Action Plans for 2024-25, in consultation with the Groundsman, which was noted.

b) Cemeteries – no matters to update

c) Community Garden

The Clerk noted that the Landlord had been contacted with a view to seeking consent to a sub-let of the land (not a transfer, which was not permitted under the lease) to Grwp Resilience. Cllr Tom Moses noted the great progress being made at the Garden and asked whether any local co-ordination to support Grwp Resilience was required. It was noted that this was not necessary as Vicky Moller was now managing activities at the Garden. Cllr Shane Pearce noted that he would be spending more time, through his involvement with the VC Gallery and Adam's Bucketful of Hope, particularly to support the weekly Friday sessions at the Garden. He noted that this type of outdoor activity and the regular walks the VC Gallery put on for its stakeholders and volunteers helped promote mental health and wellbeing. It was noted that Cllr Shane Pearce would need to declare his interest in any matters relating to his involvement with the VC Gallery and with Adam's Bucketful of Hope, at any point Council discussed matters relating to those organisations. Cllr Peter Lewis asked about progress with the Lottery funding return, noting that an extension to the original May 2023 date had been granted, which the Clerk confirmed was being finalised – this included a charge for admin support to the project and the receipt of an invoice for the Community Garden sign from Cllr Arthur Brooker requested at the Full Council meeting on 21 December 2023. Cllr Peter Lewis proposed the following recommendation, which was seconded by Cllr Bob Simister, with all voting in favour.

Recommendation:	That any declaration of intent in relation to the Community Gardens be directed to Vicki Moller in the first instance.
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d) Sports Pavilion

The Clerk advised that remedial action to repair the rusting height restriction barrier to the car park had reached its limit and action needed to be taken to either remove or replace it entirely before it deteriorated further and potentially caused damage where it is either hit by, or fell on, a vehicle entering the car park.

The Clerk had that afternoon sent an email to Cllr Bob Simister with photos provided by the Groundsman showing the current poor state of the barrier. Cllr Peter Lewis proposed a recommendation be made to Full Council, which was seconded by Cllr Bob Simister, that the barrier be repaired or replaced. All voted in favour.

Recommendation:	That the height restriction barrier at the entrance to the Sports Pavilion Car Park be repaired or replaced. The Clerk to then arrange for quotes to be obtained.
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e) Old Wool Market

Cllr Bob Simister had asked the Clerk to add updates on the Council's offices on future agendas, for which an Action Plan for 2024-25 would also be drawn up. Cllr Peter Lewis proposed and Cllr Randell Thomas-Turner seconded, that the Council produce a plan to covering the future development and maintenance of the Council's office building, which would include input from the Old Wool Market T&FG. All voted in favour.

Recommendation:	2024-25 Action Plan to be prepared for Old Wool Market in conjunction with the OWM Task and Finish Group which the Clerk is including in the scheduling of T&FG meetings.
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f) Civic and other Town Events

The Clerk noted that preparatory discussions regarding dates for events for the year had started and that a meeting of the Task and Finish Group is being scheduled, in order that advance planning and bookings can be completed early. This included T&FG meetings for the Christmas Lights (in particular the retender of the contract) and the 2024 Sheriffs' Association Weekend/AGM being hosted in Haverfordwest during the last weekend in September. The Clerk noted that Cllrs Julia Brady and Randell Thomas-Turner had volunteered to join this T&FG, which currently comprised of Cllrs Helen and Martin Lewis, and Roy Thomas. It was agreed that a recommendation is made to Full Council that Cllrs Brady and Randell Thomas-Turner are added to the 2024 Sherriff's Weekend T&FG. All voted in favour

Cllr Jill Owens raised the matter of sourcing HTC Bunting around the town during the Summer which had been mentioned in earlier discussions via the Business Circle with PCC who had indicated this is something they would support. It was noted that PCC had provided a quotation for the provision of flowers for the year which had been accepted. Cllr Peter Lewis proposed and Cllr Randell Thomas-Turner seconded for arrangements to be made for HTC bunting, of a quality which may be used for several years, to be sourced and erected within the town from May 2024 to tie in with the Council's desire to positively support the wellbeing of the people who live in or visit the town. All voted in favour.

Recommendation:	Cllrs Julia Brady and Randell Thomas-Turner are added to the 2024 Sheriffs' Association Weekend/AGM T&FG.
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Recommendation:	HTC Bunting is sourced, in discussion with PCC, to be erected around the town from May 2024 (and annually thereafter)
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g) Website and Social Media pages

The positive increase in take up of the Council social media pages was noted. Cllr Peter Lewis drew attention to improvements which are needed to the HTC website to ensure that it was fit for purpose to meet the growing obligations of Councils to display meeting agenda, minutes, policies, financial information and reports on a timely basis. The Clerk agreed and that this was something the administration was grappling with within the construct of the current website from a compliance perspective but also to have a more versatile website to support the work and growth of the Council and its social media activities (and vice versa). It was agreed that a review of the website would be given priority, and a recommendation was proposed by Cllr Peter Lewis and seconded by Cllr Bob Simister to this effect, with all voting in favour.

Recommendation:	That priority is given to a review of the HTC website to ensure it meets the legal and operational requirements of the Council.
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2024-25 Action Plans

The Clerk noted that the plans were in the process of being updated in conjunction with the Chairs of respective Committee, Sub-Committee and T&FGs, as appropriate, and would be brought to the Committee's next meeting.

Items for next agenda

- 1) Community Garden – Full account of expenditure and Funding (**post meeting note: in order to finalise the report to submit to Heritage Lottery, this item is being brought to the Full Council meeting on 25 January**)
- 2) Review of 2024-25 Action Plans.

With no further business to consider, the meeting was at 7.43pm.

APPENDIX 2

Minutes of the hybrid meeting of the Personnel, Policy and Finance (PPF) Committee held on Thursday 11 January 2024 at 6pm in the Old Wool Market

Present	Cllr H Lewis Cllr J Brady Cllr K Jones Cllr M Lewis Cllr J Owens Cllr R Thomas Vanessa Lewis Camacho	PPF Committee Chairman Chairman of Council / Mayor - Ex-officio Town Clerk
Apologies	Cllr A Brooker Cllr John Hackett	
Observer	Cllr P Lewis Cllr B Simister	

Cllr Helen Lewis welcomed everyone to the meeting. Council Members who normally attended as observers and who had sent their apologies included Cllr(s) Randell Thomas-Turner who was holding a Castle Ward Surgery at 7 pm the same evening, which Cllr John Hackett was also attending.

Declarations of interest from Members

Agenda Item	Member	Interest	Nature of interest
No declarations			

Matters arising from the minutes of the last meeting held on 5 December 2023

2024 Sheriffs' Weekend/AGM – the first meeting of the Task & Finish Group (T&FG) would be held the following week. [*Post meeting note: a meeting scheduled to be held at 5.15 p.m. on Thursday 18 January 2023 was cancelled due to snow, is being re-scheduled*].

Haverfordwest Civic Society Blue Plaques – the Clerk provided an update on the response from the Society to Council's suggestion of spreading the cost of replacement plaques over a 4-5 year period, and request to provide a couple of more quotes, if possible, recognising that there would not be a local supplier for this. The Society had considered the Council's request but felt that a two-year project to renew and refurbish the existing plaques would be more appropriate. The Society were not also keen on the use of QR Codes on the plaques, as there had been reports that this is open to scammers, but were willing to meet and discuss the matter further with Council. Cllr Martin Lewis proposed not to make a recommendation to Full Council at this stage and for a further discussion to be held with the Society. This was seconded.

Update on Accounts since Full Council Meeting on 23 November 2023

The Town Clerk confirmed that the Accountant had been given access to the Edge system that day and that he had agreed to come into Old Wool Market on Tuesday 23 January to perform a reconciliation of invoices against the bank statements up to the half year, 30 September 2023. Meanwhile all incoming invoices and expenditure was being recorded outside of the Edge system with all payments made via online banking, once expenditure had been approved by Full Council each month, when details of the latest bank account balances are provided. No events which impacted the Council's reserves had occurred under the new Administration.

Submission of Precept to Pembrokeshire County Council

Further to the 2024-25 budget, recommended by the Committee and approved at Full Council meeting on 21 December 2023, which reflected no increase in the Council's precept requirement as calculated at the rate of £78.75 per Band D property, it was agreed to recommend that the precept request be submitted to PCC.

Recommendation	That the 2024-25 Precept request be submitted to Pembrokeshire County Council
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Scribe Accounts

As previously discussed, the Committee was asked to consider a proposal to move from Edge to the Scribe Accounting system, which having undertaken appropriate research was considered to be a better system specifically for use by councils. It was proposed by Cllr Roy Thomas and seconded by Cllr Kevin Jones to recommend the change to the new accounting system to Full Council. After a short discussion on agreeing the timing for the implementation of the new system, particularly given the hiatus in the new Administration not accessing the Edge accounting system, the proposal was amended to recommend the change to the new accounting system after seeking the advice of the Accountant who was very experienced in the implementation of new accounting systems, so as to ensure a smooth closure of the financial year end.

Recommendation	That the accounting system be changed from Edge to Scribe subject to seeking advice on the implementation from the Accountant prior to the Full Council meeting on 25 January 2024.
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Review of Audit Wales Audit Opinions

Cllr Peter Lewis had asked the Clerk to circulate the Audit Wales Audit Opinions for the financial years ended 31 March 2022 and 2023. The latter had been circulated to all members of Council upon receipt, which recognised some governance process improvements were needed, whereas the majority of current Council members would not necessarily have been aware of 2022 Audit Opinion which had raised a number of inconsistencies at that time. The point Cllr Peter Lewis wished to make was that it was important for the Council to learn from past experiences and to focus on ensuring that it strives to operate in accordance with proper practice in ensuring the relevant legislation and regulatory requirements are met. The new Clerk noted that the current administration is working hard to improve transparency via the Council's website, for example, but had experienced some issues where previous agendas and minutes had disappeared from the website, and some edits made were not showing on the live site, following a website upgrade by the host, which had been frustrating as priority had been given to this. Cllr Helen Lewis thanked Cllr Peter Lewis for bringing these matters to the Clerk's and the Council's attention.

Applications for Financial Assistance

No applications had been received.

Items for next agenda (item brought forward on agenda for staffing to be last item):

No new items proposed at the meeting.

Staffing Matters

All voted in favour of exercising the PUBLIC BODIES ADMISSION TO MEETINGS) ACT 1960.

Resolved

That as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting

Members of the public left at 6.35pm.

Recommendation

That a meeting of the Staffing Sub-Committee be held to review vacancies for a Mace Bearer and Sword Bearer and to consider staffing resources over the short and medium-term in order to meet the Council's operational needs.

The meeting closed at 6.45pm