

**Minutes of the hybrid meeting of the Management, Estates and Strategy (MES) Committee
held on Tuesday 5 March 2024 at 6pm in the Old Wool Market**

Present	Cllr B Simister Cllr J Owens Cllr C Black Cllr P Lewis Cllr R Thomas-Turner Cllr T Moses Vanessa Lewis Camacho	MES Committee Chairman Chairman of Council / Mayor - Ex-officio Town Clerk
Apologies	Cllr S Pearce	MES Committee Vice-Chairman
Observers	Cllr R Thomas Members 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) Helen and Martin Lewis.

Declarations of interest from Members

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

Matters arising from minutes of the last meeting held on 6 February 2023 and following Full Council (FC) meeting held on 22 February and Emergency Committee held on 27 February 2024

The Priory Saltings

Since the FC decision on 22 February to block off access from the top of the steps at the Saltings leading down to the route beyond the board walks and pathway running along the river to the Priory Ruins, which is also very muddy at certain times of the year, the Clerk noted that additional information had been received which supported the concerns raised at the FC meeting about the ownership and responsibility for this pathway. PCC Legal team had commenced proceedings to invite members of the public to evidence their usage, in a user statement and on a map of the entire Saltings area including the Priory Ruins, which would support an application by PCC Legal team to register the pathway as a Public Right of Way. This would enable the Cleddau Reaches Project to make improvements to this area. Cllr J Owens and B Simister had also visited the Saltings to view the steps and board walk area, taking in the route from the Priory Ruins. Finally, while still relatively new in role, the Clerk had since located and included a copy of the Council's Biodiversity Report (2022), which new Councillors may not have seen previously, within which the Council's interest in the Priory Saltings as one of its green spaces and its partnership with the Cleddau Reaches project aspirations are noted as key. The Clerk also noted that insurers had responded to say that they were not able to comment on the Council's latest risk assessment of the Saltings but confirmed that providing that a thorough risk assessment has been conducted and appropriate and necessary measures to mitigate the risk identified implemented, the Council's public liability cover will apply.

Cllr P Lewis noted that currently the Town Council had no authority or responsibility for the land from Prior Ruins to the entrance to the Saltings and assumed PCC would put up a sign to warn the public of any possible dangers along the lines of the one erected by CADW relating to the ruins. Also, should disagreement continue on the safety of the steps, he would change his stance if the absence of a handrailing passes relevant legislation. He intended to seek assurance of this from PCC's disability officer. Cllr T Moses reiterated that since the original Risk Assessment undertaken in 2021, any recommendation to instal a handrail was deemed to be low risk. Cllr J Owens noted that the steps have never had a handrail and having viewed them during her visit, did not feel they were necessary as the steps are fitting of the type found in a nature area such as the Saltings. She recommended that the proposed improvement work is carried out once the weather is better (which would remove the cost of having to board the area for machinery/equipment to access the area to put aggregate down) and noted that the area was not deemed

closed by members of the public who continue to use it. Members of the public who had mobility issues in particular wheelchair users, or indeed those with pushchairs, would not consider using the area if appropriate signage as to suitability is installed.

Cllr P Lewis proposed a motion that once the gravel is placed at the Clay Lanes entry/exit the nature reserve should be reopened to the public for use by members of the public. Once the remedial work at the Priory entrance/exit is completed (totally repaired path and suitable railings for the steps) the nature reserve should be reopened for use by members of the public. Prior to each opening a sign should be put at the entrance to say "Visitors are advised to be very careful when using this amenity as the surface of the designated paths are undulating in nature." This was not seconded.

Cllr T Moses noted again that the risk assessment had perhaps adopted a more 'belt and braces' approach and had included the route under the bridges along the river. For example, mentioning the handrail provided unnecessary information. The risk assessment could be redone but he felt this would be a waste of public money.

Cllr R Thomas-Turner proposed that as previously discussed and now recommended in the Clerk's paper that appropriate signage is put up, agree to get the improvements done, in order to get the Saltings up and running again. Cllr J Owens mentioned that since FC meeting on 22 February and following her visit to the site with Cllr Simister with the Clerk and Groundsman, the intention is to obtain a second quote for the improvement work.

Cllr R Thomas noted he had no objection to opening the Saltings and that it appeared to be the handrail issue which is preventing this.

Cllr T Moses proposed a motion to recognise new information was available since the Council's decision to block of access at its 22 February meeting; appropriate signage is put in place at all entrances/exits to the Saltings before re-opening the site; the adjustment to one riser on the steps down to the board walk is made and gravel on the steps is maintained; that no handrailing is necessary on the steps (therefore not good use of public money), and the work to replace the board walk and adding gravel around the kissing gate, is completed when weather conditions are more appropriate. This was seconded by Cllr R Thomas-Turner. Three members voted in favour, one voted against, and one abstained.

Recommendation:	Following new information available to Council's decision on 22 February 2024 that the above motion proposed by Cllr T Moses and seconded by Cllr R Thomas-Turner, and which received a majority vote in favour by Members of MES, is made to Full Council.
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Sports Pavilion – noted that the Emergency Committee held on 27 February had approved the quotation to replace the unsafe height restriction barrier which will be carried out as a priority.

Old Wool Market – Cllr P Lewis asked why the Task & Finish Group (T&FG) does not report on latest developments directly to Full Council. [Post meeting note: Clerk confirms that while OWM forms part of the MES Committee 'Estates' remit, the OWM T&FG, according to the current Committees, Sub-Committees and T&FG Terms of Reference document reports to Full Council.]

2024 Sheriffs' Association AGM (hosted by Town Council – September) as this is a hosted event outside of the usual Town Council event calendar, noted that the activity of this T&FG will report through the Personnel, Policy and Finance Committee.

Terrence Higgins Trust Memorial Garden – as noted at Full Council meeting on 22 February, the Trust took an economic decision not to re-locate the garden to Haverfordwest.

Updates on other matters relating to:

Christmas Lights Sub-Committee – contract re-tender – Clerk acknowledged that this Sub-Committee needs to meet and a time was being set for this to take place week commencing 11 March. Cllr R Thomas-

Turner noted that the Pastor of Lifepoint Pembrokeshire Church has expressed an interest in collaborating with the Council around Christmas events. Cllr Thomas-Turner noted that he attended this Church and so would need to declare his interest at any future discussions pertaining to it. Meanwhile, he was asked to refer any further inquiries to the Clerk.

Summer Bunting – while not an MES agenda item, Cllr P Lewis raised a concern about progress following Council’s decision to display bunting in the town from May and suggested this is brought to Full Council agenda on 21 March.

Cemeteries – the Clerk noted that a quotation had been presented for approval for the repair to the railings and gates at Upper Prendergast to the Emergency Committee held on 27 February, however, additional quotations were being obtained to ensure best value as such repairs, despite being needed and long overdue, were less urgent and technical in nature than the replacement of the height restriction barrier and gate quotation, for example, which was approved at that meeting.

The Clerk had gone out for quotations from three stonemasons for the repairs to the wall at St Martin’s cemetery, but only one of which had responded with any interest. A site visit had taken place with the Groundsman with this stonemason, whose work is notable in Haverfordwest, and a quote was awaited.

Recommendation:	Expenditure for Upper Prendergast railings/gate and St Martin’s Cemetery is brought by the Clerk to MES Committee or Full Council meeting, whichever is the sooner and most expedient.
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Community Garden Sub-lease – the Clerk updated the Committee on the discussion with the Landlord and recommended that a Sub-let of the property at Lower Cambrian Way to Grwp Resilience CBC (GR) and appropriate management agreement is put in place. This was on the basis that the Landlord was willing to approve a sub-let over an assignment of lease, which was a more formal and costly exercise, and that they would still wish the Council to guarantee as GR was not known to them. At the end of the five-year lease, the Landlord would consider an assignment albeit there was no interest in extending the term of the lease for this type of property. The Clerk recommended she speak with Vicki Moller to progress this. Noted that the Landlord had also been asked to provide a rent demand as this had not been received.

Recommendation:	Community Garden is sub-let to Grwp Resilience and Clerk discuss management arrangements with Vicki Moller for this to be documented by way of a management agreement.
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Picton Centre – the Clerk confirmed that final invoices to PCC are being raised to covering Council’s costs relating to Picton Centre since the Edge/PCC Youth occupancy since 1 April 2022 and Y2 rent (2023-24) and sent to Council’s solicitors dealing with the final lease, for payment at completion. As far as the Clerk is aware there are no outstanding points on the lease itself. These had been addressed. Therefore, pressure will be put on solicitors and PCC to sign the lease before 31 March 2023 in order to conclude this issue.

Recommendation:	Lease between Council and PCC to be finalised by solicitors, signed and completed by 31st March 2024 including reimbursement of all costs incurred by Council from PCC since its occupancy of Picton Centre.
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Website and Social Media pages

The positive increase in the use and take up of the Council social media pages was noted. Clerk confirmed that website suppliers were being contacted to present their proposals to us, with one plausible option having been received so far. This was a matter which was being given priority to ensure Council better meets its legal and operational requirements, given the current restraints being experience in using the existing website, however the Clerk noted that it would take time to implement.

Salt bins – the Clerk presented a paper evidencing requests received from members of the public during the cold spell on 18/19 January requesting salt bin provision in their roads, as directed by PCC’s website. The evidence, which included cost to council based on 12 requests, strongly suggested that this is something which members of the public want to enable them to leave their homes for work and school during increasingly harder weather conditions. It was noted that salt bin provision is one which had been devolved by Welsh Government (since 2010) from principal councils to town and community councils. Two salt bins had been ordered through PCC in January, at a cost to the Town Council, both located in Castle Ward, however, Council would need to consider if it wished to adopt a policy for ongoing provision of salt bins in the town. It was noted that this would require a strategy, working with PCC (who provide and install them (at cost to the Town Council) but who would fill them with grit up to twice a year at no cost at the request of the Town Council), for the provision of salt bins to serve specific areas (and not individual roads/residences, albeit it was noted that the two salt bins installed are not very large).

Recommendation:	Clerk to review size and further costings of bins as well as provision strategy, including clarity on reliance of volunteers to set the grit down, with PCC and to bring update back to MES for further consideration.
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Items for next agenda

None raised.

With no further business to consider, the meeting ended at 7.33 pm.