

ANNUAL REPORT
HARLECH
COMMUNITY COUNCIL
2023/2024

A WORD FROM THE CHAIRMAN – CLLR. EDWINA EVANS

It is a pleasure to present Harlech Community Council's second annual report which records the work that has been undertaken in 2023/24 and how we are working with the community to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of the town to make Harlech an even better place to live and visit. The vision is to “ensure that Harlech continues to be a pleasant and welcoming place for people of all ages to live because they will feel safe, have opportunities to be physically and mentally healthy and to socialise and work in a quality environment. It will also be a place that welcomes visitors and lives with them easily.” The report aims to give a taste of the work of the Community Council during the year and how the Council promotes life for residents of all ages, business owners, societies and visitors to the town. We acknowledge that this is a challenging environment for everyone and we are committed to work together with the community to achieve the vision. Although there are plenty of challenges for us as a Community Council, we have managed to carry out a number of exciting projects. It has been a privilege to Chair the Community Council.

Membership

Cllr. Edwina Evans (Chairman)

Cllr. Christopher Braithwaite (Vice Chairman)

Cllr. Mark Armstrong – resigned September 2023

Cllr. Giles Bentham – elected January 2024

Cllr. Rhian Corps

Cllr. Ceri Griffiths

Cllr. Emma Howie – resigned March 2024

Cllr. Gordon Howie

Cllr. Martin Hughes

Cllr. Tegid John
Cllr. Huw Jones – resigned February 2024
Cllr. Thomas Mort
Cllr. Wendy Williams

Two Councillors represent the area on Gwynedd Council namely Cllr. Annwen Hughes and Cllr. Gwynfor Owen.

For the first time in 44 years an election was held at a cost of £2,626 to the Community Council to elect a Community Councillor to fill a vacant seat that existed on the Community Council following the resignation of Cllr. Mark Armstrong in September 2023. Cllr. Giles Bentham was duly elected to fill the vacant seat and he signed his Declaration of Acceptance form at the January meeting of the Community Council. Sadly two other Councillors have resigned from the Community Council namely Cllr. Huw Jones in February and Cllr. Emma Howie in March and the process of electing their successors is underway.

Staff

The Council has one member of staff, Annwen Hughes, who is the Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer. She works part-time. The Clerk may be contacted by e-mail clerk@cyngorharlech.co.uk , letter to Crafnant, Llanbedr, Gwynedd LL45 2PH or phone 01341241613/07919582741.

Meetings

Normal meetings of the Council are held monthly except for August at the Old Library in the town on the first Monday of every month apart from May when the meeting is held on the second Monday because of the bank holiday.

Website

Information about the Community Council including the agendas and minutes of meetings, policies and news is available on the Community Council's website: www.cyngorharlech.co.uk

EXTERNAL MEMBERSHIP

The Community Council is a member of One Voice Wales, which is the main representative body for Community and Town councils in Wales. The Community Council elects Members to other external bodies, namely, Old Library Committee, Memorial Hall Committee and the Governing Body of Ysgol Tan y Castell.

ACCOUNTABILITY

The Community Council has adopted a Member's Code of Conduct and a register of interests is kept for each member. Each Councillor has to declare any interest they have in items to be discussed at the start of each meeting and these are noted in the minutes. The Community Council is audited by internal and external auditors annually. The internal audit is undertaken by the Audit Department of Gwynedd Council and the External Audit by the Wales Audit Office.

FINANCE AND EXPENDITURE

The Community Council sets a budget annually and monitors expenditure against budget throughout the financial year by receiving a regular report from the Clerk. The main source of income for the Community Council is the precept which is set annually and presented to Gwynedd Council in January for the following financial year. The precept is collected on behalf of the Community Council by Gwynedd Council and is the only source of tax revenue available to Town and Community Councils. The process of deciding on the level of precept includes the preparation of a draft budget on the basis of the financial situation of the Community Council by considering the likely costs, plans for projects, setting an amount for contributions - within the

guidelines published annually - and any other financial matters. Consideration is also given to the reserves held by the Community Council to ensure an appropriate precept is set. The level of precept was kept at £70,000 for 2023/24. In addition, the Community Council received £7,056.71 from the 10% Parking Scheme by Gwynedd Council which it joined a few years ago.

Income & Expenditure 2023/24

	Income £	Expenditure £
Bank Interest	1,146.71	
Precept	70,000.00	
Cemetery Income	8,418.72	
Allotments Rent	375.00	
Grant PACT	249.25	
Hire of King George playing field	150.00	
Compensation from HSBC	100.00	
Reimbursement Car Parks Income	7,056.71	
Reimbursement Footpaths Cutting	990.35	
V.A.T Reimbursement	5,851.34	
Cut Grass on Footpaths		2,133.00
Grass Cutting King George Playing Field		1,734.00
Grass Cutting Cemetery		2,052.00
Cemetery Expenditure		3,260.00
Rebuild Boundary Wall		180.00
Cutting Trees on Nature Trail		600.00
Community Garden Materials		243.68
New Play Equipment		26,982.00
Play Parks Inspection		324.00
Create Play Park Path		900.00
Purchase and Install bollards		1,318.16
Remove Seat		360.00)
Toilets materials (castle toilets)		384.72

Toilets caretaker (castle toilets)	1,430.23
Toilets Partnership	10,000.00
Welsh Water (toilets)	792.37
Welsh Water (allotments)	28.98
Donations	5,650.00
Memorial Hall Committee	2,000.00
Old Library Committee	2,000.00
Contribution to HAL	21,000.00
Clerk's Wages	1,764.00
Clerk's Costs	910.45
Office Costs	250.00
Tax on Clerk's Wages	439.80
P.A.Y.E on line	216.00
Hire of Meeting Room	177.00
Tennis Courts Rates	22.74
Create New Website	650.00
Administration of Website	285.99
Council's Insurance	1,709.15
Empty Playing Field Bins	866.11
Eradicate Moles	150.00
Eradicate hemlock	150.00
Christmas Lights	1,200.00
Harlech Mop Fair	1,610.00
Internal Audit 2022/23	294.00
External Audit 2020/21 & 2021/22	1,700.00
Newspaper Advertisements	708.60
Community Council Election	2,626.20
One Voice Wales Membership	334.00
One Voice Wales Training Course	38.00
Various	164.70
Bank Costs	114.40
	£94,338.08
	£99,754.28

BUDGET

The Council's precept is £70,000 and is earmarked as follows:-

Donates £10,000 to Gwynedd Council to keep the public toilets open (the one in Bron y Graig Isaf car park and the one near the Queens hotel are open all year round and the one in Min y Don car park is open for 6 months of the year)

Also donated £21,000.00 in this financial year to Harlech and Arduwy Leisure (HAL) to keep the swimming pool open.

To date the Council has spent £1,177.90 on maintaining the public toilets near the Memorial Hall, and also the Council has paid the caretaker £1,430.23 for cleaning these toilets on a daily basis. The Council is closing these toilets over the winter season so they can carry out more maintenance work on them.

The Council spent £26,982.00 on new play equipment in the King George V playing field and also £900 to create a disabled friendly user path from the road to the play area. This expenditure on the playground was above what was budgeted for originally, but the Members agreed that this work had to be carried out as many members of the public were complaining that there was not enough play equipment in the King George V playground to keep youngsters entertained and off the street.

The Council spends a substantial sum to cut the grass in the public cemetery, Llyn y Felin play park and King George V play park regularly

every two weeks between April and October. Also the grass on various public footpaths in the area are cut at least twice a year. The cost of all this work in this financial year was £5,919. The Council also spent £3,260 as expenditure for opening graves in the public cemetery.

The Council donates to various organizations in the area annually at their monthly meetings in October and March and have contributed £3,000 To Friends of Tan y Castell School, £2,000 to the local Cylch Meithrin and £650 towards the purchase of two Blue Plaques to commemorate well known people who lived in the town. £2,000 each annually is contributed to the running of the Memorial Hall and the Old Library due to the Community Council been Trustees of both these organizations. These contributions are included in the Council's precept.

This year the Council have contributed £1,200 towards the christmas lights in the town and £1,610 for the annual Mop Fair to be held in the town.

Unfortunately in December 2022 the Council was financially defrauded out of £9,000 by a person claiming to be going to carry out consultancy work. This matter, at the moment, is under investigation by the Financial Ombudsman and their outcome is still awaited.

On the 7th November the Council received a report in the public interest to Harlech Community Council. The report reflected on comments that was received by Audit Wales in response to our consideration document. The Auditor General issued this report under powers granted by section 22 of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004. A copy of the report was published on Audit Wales's website on the 8th of November 2023.

Council work and responsibilities

Property management

2 play parks namely King George V and LLyn y Felin

The Public Cemetery

The Public Footpaths

Bron y Graig Nature Trail

Bus shelters in the area

Plinth at Pen y Graig

The Old Slaughter House

Public Seats

Administration

Gwynedd Council appointed as Internal Auditors 2023/24

Allowances – review no change, no payments

Council website

Keep a risk assessment.

Keeping a record of interest