



St Harmon Community Council

Annual Report

2021/22

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Introduction

This Annual Report sets out to inform the residents of St Harmon and Pant y Dwr about the activities undertaken by St Harmon Community Council during the 2021/22. It is based on the financial year 1st April – 31st March. The report contains a brief outline of the structure of the Council, an overview of the Council's activities throughout the year and a financial summary.

Contact

The Council does not have an office space. The Clerk works from home and the contact details for the council are:

Jane Johnston PSLCC, CiLCA (Wales)
Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer
10 Ddole Road
Llandrindod Wells
Powys
LD1 6PF

The Council

The Council is comprised of eight Members (Councillors) and the area does not have wards.

The Council elects a Chair and a Vice Chair at the Council's Annual Meeting every May. The Council is supported by one part-time member of staff; the Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer who is currently Jane Johnston.

Members

The following members were in place during 2021/22

Cllr Donald Jenkins	Chair	Resigned as Chair 24.11.21
Cllr Jill Bennion	Vice Chair	Resigned from Council 02.12.21
Cllr Sheila Jenkins		Resigned from Council 04.11.21
Cllr David Lowde	Chair from 02.12.21	
Cllr Linda McPhee	Vice Chair from 02.12.21	
Cllr Sheree Lewis		
Cllr Peter Hunt		
Cllr Mark Williams		
Cllr Aaron Mills		Co-opted 07.01.22

Committees

The Council previously operated a Committee system. However, in response to observations made by Audit Wales, this was removed by resolution of the Council on 6th January 2022.

Task & Finish Groups

The Council did not have any Task & Finish Groups operational during this period. However, a Focus Group remains in operation to support the Community Broadband Scheme with Community Council membership. This is an on-going project in conjunction with Broadway Partners.

Services & Facilities

St Harmon Community Council provides the following services & facilities:

- Pant y Dwr Play Area
- "Recreation Field" at St Harmon currently a grass let subject to annual tender
- 2 Bus Shelters
- Community Noticeboards
- 2 de-commissioned ex BT telephone kiosks housing public access defibrillators/book swaps
- Marquee
- Digital projector (on loan to the Community Hall)
- Community Website

Grants & Donations

The Council operates a grant system for the benefit of local groups which may apply for grant funding to carry out work for the benefit of members of the community within the electoral boundary of St Harmon and Pant y Dwr.

The grants application system is open throughout the year. Applications must be submitted in writing to the Clerk containing as much information as possible. The council has a limited budget allocation.

Below is a list of grants allocated during 2021/22:

Group	Amount	Purpose
Community Hall	£1500	Grant for services & operation

Bryn Titli Fund (Wind Farm)

The Council is awarded a sum of money annually from the Bryn Titli Wind Farm project. This is for allocation to community groups and community projects. The Community Council manages this fund and allocations are made under 2 separate processes: Grant Funding and Community benefit Purchases/Allocations.

- Grant Funding

This is managed in two phases

Phase 1 1st April – 31st July Allocations are made in September

Phase 2 1st October – 31st January Allocations are made in March

The criteria and application forms are held on the Community Council website -

http://www.stharmoncommunitycouncil.gov.uk/?page_id=932

In the period covered by this Annual report, the following grants to local organisations were made:

Group	Amount	Purpose
Community Hall	£829.34	Purchase of 2 Table Trolleys

Grants allocated during the Covid 19 period have been significantly less as many events were cancelled due to Welsh Government restrictions. This scheme will continue for the next few years.

- Community Benefit Purchases/Allocations

The following purchases were made via the Bryn Titli Fund which were deemed for community benefit:

Item	Amount	Purpose
2 Defibrillator Signs	£48.10	For display on Kiosks
Litter/Recycling Bin	£142.95	Pant y Dwr Play Area
Digital Projector	£1550.00	On loan to Community Hall
Bench Seating	£500.00	At Community Hall
Projector Case	£34.91	At Community Hall
Christmas Tree	£120.00	Sited in St Harmon
Community Noticeboard	£166.90	To be sited in Pant y Dwr

Financial Information

The Budget

The Community Council raises most of its money via the local government precept. The precept for 2021/22 equated to £18837, this was an increase of £5804 on 2020/21 due mainly to the indicated potential fees for the Audit Wales Investigation. (Further information follows later in this report.)

The Council had been without a paid Clerk for some time and the final salary paid was on 14th January 2020. This enabled the council to accrue £3100 within its reserves to offset some of the potential amount due to Audit Wales.

Financial Summary

Budget Heading	Budget Set 2021/22	Total Budget (Including Ear Marked Reserves)	Actual Expenditure 2021/22
Salary	1500	4600	5705
Training – Staff & Members, SLCC	150	350	220
Clerks Expenses – Admin Costs	0	1200	135
Clerk’s Home Working Allowance	156	156	156
Meeting Room Hire	0	440	36
Remote Hosting & IT Back Up	500	500	370
Insurance	581	581	573
Audit Fees	10500	10500	151
One Voice Wales	110	110	100
Website	350	350	0
Information Commissioner	40	40	35
Donations	200	400	0
Community Hall Grant	1500	1500	1500
Recreational Field (Grass Let)	(275)	(275) income	122
Play Area	300	300	60

Elections	900	900	130
Care Costs (Statutory)	300	300	0
Members Allowance	750	1200	450
Contingencies	1000	1487	1105
Total Budget	18837	24914	
Earmarked Reserves – 31.03.22		15423	
General Reserves – 31.03.22		3984	
Total Reserves		19407	

Budget Monitoring

Since the engagement of a new Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer in December 2020, regular budget monitoring is undertaken and is presented to the Council on a quarterly basis. A monthly bank reconciliation is presented at each meeting and is published within the Minutes. This is to ensure openness and transparency for the benefit of the community and its residents.

The Community Council is committed to using local contractors and suppliers wherever possible and believes in the value of the “Powys Pound.”

Council Financial Reserves

The Council holds financial reserves some of which are held within individual budget headings and others are held within general reserves. It is crucial the Council holds sufficient reserves to maintain its operation effectively and in preparation for future projects and services. A full list of financial reserves is provided to members at the end of each financial year (1st April.) These are also reported via the external audit process.

Audit Wales Investigation

The Community Council has been under investigation by Audit Wales based on the 2018/19 annual return. This has been ongoing for a considerable time and an Immediate Public Interest Report was published by Audit Wales in October 2021 - document reference: 2568A2021-22 - Inadequacies in Governance, Financial Management and Internal Control Arrangements – St Harmon Community Council - http://www.stharmoncommunitycouncil.gov.uk/?page_id=55

The report extended to 63 pages with 291 individual points listed. It detailed many inadequacies identified within the actions of the Council and the actions of some individual members. Two recommendations were made:

R1 – recommend that the Council prepares and agrees an action plan to address the numerous weaknesses and deficiencies in its governance and financial management arrangements identified within this document.

R2 – recommend that the Council consider whether there are matters raised in this report that should be referred to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales as potential breaches of the Council Members Code of Conduct.

In response, the Council presented the full report to an Open Council Meeting held on 3rd November 2021 which was attended by many local residents. Notification of this meeting was published in the Brecon & Radnor Express and on the Council’s website and noticeboards.

A full response to Audit Wales was agreed at this meeting and submitted following the meeting. This included a copy of the Council Action/Improvement Plan as referred to below.

Financial Governance Action Plan

Responding to issues raised during the Audit Wales investigation with regard to the Internal Audit process, the Council engaged an experienced and qualified Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer (Jane Johnston) to undertake the Internal Audit for 2019/20.

Jane Johnston undertook a full internal audit during May 2020. Many issues were raised and were reflected in the Internal Audit Report issued and presented to the Council on 22nd June 2020. Ms Johnston attended this meeting to run through the issues in detail with all members.

As a gesture to the Council and the community, Ms Johnston offered to prepare an Action/Improvement Plan to assist the Council to develop its processes within legal parameters and ensure community governance is followed in future. Ms Johnston prepared a detailed plan for the Council to work through. No charge was made for this work.

The Council began to work through this plan under the guidance of the then Chair.

In December 2020, the Council engaged Jane Johnston as Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer to the Community Council and she has continued to work through the Improvement Plan with the Council.

The Council has now fulfilled the criteria under Recommendation 1 of the Audit Wales Report and continues to monitor legal requirements on a regular basis.

Council Members Code of Conduct

Recommendation 2 of the Audit Wales Report recommended that the Council consider referring named members to the Public Services Ombudsman. On 3rd November 2021 the Council resolved to report Cllr Donald Jenkins and Cllr Sheila Jenkins to the Public Services Ombudsman and this report was submitted. The investigation by the Ombudsman is in progress.

Projects

During 2021/22 the Council worked on the following projects:

- Implementation of policies and procedures which were not previously in place
- Ensuring financial procedures meet with legislation
- Potential tree planting via Woodland Trust Project
- Representation on the Garn Fach Liaison Group and Smithfield Trust
- Promotion of a Community Broadband Scheme in partnership with Broadway Partners.
- Development of increased Community Engagement
- Utilise Facebook page - <https://www.facebook.com/St-Harmon-Pantydwr-730585450410503>

Looking Forward

May 2022 brought local government elections when all eight council seats were open to election. This brought the end to a five-year term. Three members were nominated and were elected unopposed. The vacant seats will be offered for co-option.

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 introduced new requirements for Town & Community Councils. The Council is committed to implementing these new requirements within required timescales.

The Council wishes to develop its partnership working and also to continue to promote community engagement by attending community events and producing regular Information Updates.