LLANDRINDOD WELLS TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a remote Meeting held on Tuesday 15th December, 2020

Present: Cllr S Deeks-D’Silva, L Weerdmeester-Price, J Jones, M Morgan, K Nicholls, S Sims, S Meredudd, B Williams, J Shaw

Apologies: Cllr K Brelstaff, K Evans, J Hawker, W Curzon

Absent: Cllr H Primmer

The Chair welcomed everyone to the last meeting of 2020.

TC 168/20 Declaration of Interest
Cllr Weerdmeester-Price TC 174/20a
Cllr S Meredudd TC 174/20a

TC 169/20 Minutes
The minutes of the meeting held on 17th November, 2020 were approved and signed.

TC 170/20 Clerks’ Report
None.

TC 171/20 Chairs Report
The Chair in his role as Mayor, had the pleasure of accompanying the High Sheriff of Powys, Rhian Duggan on her visit to Llandrindod Wells. They had visited Doves & Dandy’s, the Radnorshire Museum and KDM Hub. The High Sheriff then drew the first few winning tickets in the November Local to Llandrindod Raffle and then was invited to afternoon tea by the Chair and his wife. This had been a great pleasure for the Mayor and his wife.

The Chair in his role as Mayor, had also attended the 500-word Short Story Competition and hosted a reception in Portland House for the participants and guests.

The Mayor and his wife took a tour around Llandrindod earlier in the week to look at the shop/business Christmas windows. They were really impressed with so many lovely displays. The prize winners are as follows:

First Bradley’s (Celf O Gwmpas)
Second Coversure
Third Simply Cuts
Most Humorous Prithcard’s Cycles
Highly Commended First Steps Nursery

The Chair finished off by wishing the residents of Llandrindod Wells a happy and healthy Christmas and asked everyone to stay safe and follow the Covid 19 guidelines.
Correspondence

a) Kirsty Williams AM – NHS Dental Provision Crisis in Powys

The following response was received:

“I am of course aware that access to dentistry has been a significant matter of concern for constituents in the Llandrindod Wells and Builth Wells areas over a number of years and I have met on several occasions with the Chief Dental Officer for PTHB about this. I know that there have been recruitment issues at the practice in Llandrindod Wells and that last year the refurbishment at Llandrindod Hospital also limited activity.

Although COVID 19 has stretched every health service, I agree with the Town Council that there are longstanding issues with provision in Llandrindod Wells that need resolving and I will raise this with both the Chief Executive of Powys Teaching Health Board and the Minister for Health and Social Services directly. I will of course keep the Town Council updated on the progress I am able to make.”

Adrian Osbourne – PTHB - NHS Dental Provision Crisis in Powys

The following response was received:

“I have ensured that your correspondence has been shared with the office of our Director of Primary Care, Community and Mental Health Services – he has lead responsibility within the health board for dental services - so that he can respond to you on the issues you have raised.

Jamie Merchant, Executive Director Primary, Community Care and Mental Health Services, PTHB

The following response was received:

“Thank you for your letter dated 25th November 2020 to Adrian Osborne. I understand Adrian acknowledged the letter and confirmed that he had passed the letter to me to respond.

I note the concern of the Town Council in your recent meeting regarding dental provision in Powys and specifically the town of Llandrindod Wells. I am not aware of the national report you allude to but I can agree that the Covid 19 pandemic has brought immense challenges to all health sectors including general dental practitioners (GDPs). When the Covid pandemic came upon us in March 2020 a Welsh Government position clarified the role of dentistry in the first wave.

The service was placed in a ‘red status’ meaning routine dental work was halted nationally, however practices remained open to address urgent dental problems. In the summer of 2020 this was moved to an improved ‘amber status’ allowing dentists to increase their offer to patients, albeit with specific limitations. As you will understand this has reduced the immediate offer to patients across Wales.

An additional and specific challenge for GDPs, which I will expand on later, is that a large portion of their normal clinical work involves what is known as Aerosol Generating Procedures (AGPs). The approach necessary in managing these AGPs in a dental room involves additional PPE, cleaning regimes, air circulation and also “fallow time” between patients.”
Throughput of patients through a clinic is therefore markedly reduced in dentistry at this time, by as much as 60% reduction, to ensure patient and staff safety.

Your letter provides the view of Council that the service in mid Powys has been “failing for a long time” and “that nothing tangible has been done” thus my response aims to update you on the actions that have been taken in recent years, as well as those planned in the coming months to continue to improve the situation during the pandemic and also for once the pandemic has ended.
I feel it might be helpful at this stage to explain how the dental contract functions. National Health Service GDPs are independent contractors who are contracted to provide a level of activity over a 12-month period. The practice may not be able to deliver the activity in that year due to a variety of reasons, with recruitment being one of the reasons. Under the GDS rules and regulations, however a provider cannot have the contract reduced in value unless they either agree to this or that they have failed to deliver the contract over more than one year. This means that if a practice is not able to deliver the level of activity in year one, the contract remains in place and funding is still committed. The advantage of this is that it provides security for a provider if the issue is of a temporary nature and encourages practices to remain in business but a Health Board cannot terminate a contract due to one year of lower than planned activity. This mechanism will be particularly relevant in this year when practices have not been able to deliver their historical levels. From April 1st 2021, it is expected that practices will also embrace the national programme of dental contract reform. Contract reform is less focused on the currency of UDAs (Units of Dental Activity) and instead provides flexibility to GDPs to focus on those with most need and risk to be seen more frequently according to that need. The contract also allows the whole dental team to be utilized. This will inevitably help with access as we move away from routine 6 monthly check ups, which is not evidence based, to a needs-based approach. This means that low needs patients are seen less frequently to increase capacity for the practice. There will also be the potential for greater use of technology such for virtual appointments to generate efficiencies, with for example low needs patients having a “check in” rather than have a “check-up”.

You are correct that mid Powys has faced specific challenges in recent years and it has been a priority of the Health Board to improve that situation. Efforts prior to Covid had been yielding benefits, albeit they will not be fully realised until after the Covid pandemic. Within Llandrindod, I accept the My Dentist practice has been challenged and has struggled with recruitment. This has seen the level of provision drop from the previous levels and currently there is only one permanent dentist. The Health Board continues to be in regular dialogue with the My Dentist leadership to understand their plans for improvement of access.

As you are probably aware the My Dentist contract in Glan Irfon, Builth Wells, was handed back to the Health Board in 2018.
With no interest from other independent GDPs, the Health Board took it over as a managed practice and a strategy was implemented to develop a service which would not only increase access for the local population but also improve recruitment and retention of the dental work force by additionally having the practice designated an approved training practice for newly qualified dentists.

As a result of that strategy, I am pleased to confirm that as of August 2020, the practice is now fully staffed with a full time salaried general dental practitioner, one part time senior salaried dental officer, a full time newly qualified dentist, a part-time foundation plus dentist who as well as providing general dental services is developing enhanced skills in oral surgery, a full-time dental therapist and a newly appointed innovation dental nurse.

As I mentioned earlier in this response, the high frequency of AGPs in dentistry necessitates a combination of PPE, fallow time, air circulation and potentially mechanical air handling to ensure safety. This a particular challenge in Glan Irfon and is an infrastructure problem which could not have been foreseen, which does require mechanical air ventilation. I can re-assure you that the estates team are working closely with the building landlord to rectify this problem as soon as possible, this will allow the team to provide the full range of procedures which generate aerosols.

The Health Board remains acutely aware of the need to continually seek to improve access options and has recently agreed to seek, via a tender process a GDP who will provide additional capacity in the mid of the county for patients who require definitive timely urgent access to treatment. It is expected this will be in place for April 1st 2021.

Whilst your letter does not specifically mention specialised dentistry I wanted to take this opportunity to update you on other developments. You may be aware that the recent Llandrindod War Memorial Hospital refurbishment includes the provision of two new dental ‘chairs’ (i.e. clinics). Whilst this work has been slightly delayed we are hopeful they will be available soon and these clinics will be able to provide specialist services and accept referrals for patients who require enhanced and specialist treatment that is not within the scope of their general dental practitioner.

With regard to your comment around dental schools, whilst I welcome any ideas or suggestions, this is not within the gift of Powys THB and in all honesty would be unlikely to be given any serious consideration by relevant medical academic and professional bodies considering that there are no universities within Powys. I have however already noted that the Health Board has developed career posts which aid retention and recruitment of dentists and other members of the dental team.

I wish to assure you that the drive to improve access to dental care across Powys, and not solely to the mid Powys area is a priority for the Health Board. We will continue with our plans as outlined and seek every opportunity to attract professionals to work in Powys either as an independent contractor or within the Health Board if necessary.
There are some exciting developments underway and although the pandemic has hindered progress considerably I can re-assure all concerned that Powys THB is investing significant resources and supporting the national contract reform programme and hopefully dental access will continue to improve in the coming new year.

I hope at this stage my letter provides you with an update on the position. I note that your letter was copied to a number of people or elected officials. I will share this with the named officials and any whom have contacted us in support of your email. You are of course free to share this letter wider to any other individuals whom you shared your letter with.

Thanks again for getting in touch, and thank you for everything that the Town Council is doing to Keep Llandrindod Wells Safe.”

**Simon Parker, Primary Care Division, Welsh Government**

The following response was received:

“Thank you for your email of 25 November to the Minister for Health and Social Services, enclosing a copy of the Town Council’s letter to Powys Teaching Health Board about access to NHS dental services during the Covid-19 pandemic and recruitment of dentists to practices in the local area.

As Covid-19 is still in circulation, public health measures remain necessary to ensure a safe environment for staff, patients and communities. Physical distancing and infection control requirements have meant fewer patients can be ‘seen’ in a clinical session. Dentistry is one of the most complex areas of primary care in terms of the reinstatement of services and the requirement of enhanced PPE and time between treatments is impacting on the number of patients being treated.

We have not stopped routine dental examinations but there is a clear requirement to see patients according to need. Practices have been asked to treat people who have experienced problems during lockdown first. We also need to consider prioritising care for those who had treatment delayed as a result of the pandemic. The full return of services will continue to be a gradual process.

Turning to the issue of recruitment of dentists, it is acknowledged that historically there has been difficulty in attracting NHS dentists and indeed other services to some rural areas. We do also recognise that some dentists move on to work elsewhere after a short period of time and this can be problematic for the dental practice and its contractual arrangements with the Health Board.

Welsh Government continue to work with Cardiff University on the number of dental undergraduates and Dental Care Professional trainees. Numbers for dental undergraduates remain at 70-80 per year and we have increased the training places for dental hygienists and therapists by 41% in recognition of the changes required to the skill mix within dental workforce teams to deliver care in the longer term.
The complexity that affects the dental workforce such as changes in working patterns and increased specialisation is very much acknowledged. Our ongoing dental reform programme has highlighted the advantages of a well-balanced dental team delivering preventive based approaches in general dental services. As part of the reform programme we are working with practices to improve access, experience and quality of dental care. Significant changes are being made which have been welcomed by dental teams with currently 40% of all practices part of the reform programme. We are looking to identify and establish innovative opportunities to upskill and improve career pathways in dentistry and to ensure development of the dental workforce is aligned to the stated ambitions and themes within the Workforce Strategy for Health and Social Care 2020.

We have established an all-Wales Faculty of Dental Care Professionals (DCP) which is working with education colleges and training providers to set clear educational frameworks and monitor the quality of training. It will develop research capability, leadership and enhance the skills of DCPs to help fulfil their potential. The Faculty’s work plan includes the co-production of a framework for the future DCP workforce in Wales.

We are also working with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board on the establishment of a Dental Teaching Unit in Bangor which will increase the attractiveness to recruit and retain dental clinicians looking to develop their careers across the north and mid-Wales area.

I understand Powys Teaching Health Board is reviewing ways of developing strategies such as dental foundation posts, career development posts, and student placements. In recent years there has been investment in training for local dentists e.g. hands on course; annual rural conference etc. The Community Dental Service has also participated in career development events for interested sixth form students looking at a possible career in dentistry.

The Health Board says it has made significant investments in dentistry in the last 12-24 months but acknowledges further improvement is required. The impact of the pandemic has been very significant for dental services everywhere. Current access issues were set to be improved from April 2020 in Builth Wells, with further improvements as a result of the additional staff recruited.

The Health Board took over the management of the Glan Irfon dental practice at Builth Wells in 2019, after the My Dentist NHS contract was terminated due to its inability to recruit and retain dentists. The Health Board manages the three-chair general dental service practice based within Glan Irfon which now has a full team which includes 3 dentists; 1 foundation dentist (newly qualified); a career development post (1 year post qualification); a dental therapist; and an innovation dental nurse. However, access is currently limited during the pandemic due to the three surgeries not having windows. Remedial work to install a mechanical ventilation system is in hand and will be completed as soon as is practically possible.
Anyone seeking access to NHS dental services should contact the Health Board for the latest information. The Health Board will be able to provide details of the current level and location of available NHS dental services in the locality. They will also be able to provide details of the access sessions and availability of urgent treatment the Health Board provides for those residents not yet placed with a practice.”

The Clerk confirmed that Cty Cllr D Jones had passed the letter on to the Powys Community Health Council for their support and several other town and community councils were tabling this item on their next meeting agendas, some had already written to PTHB to offer their support.

The Clerk also obtained a response from One Voice Wales about the legality of the Town Council starting a petition. Members were advised accordingly.

Members discussed the responses received and although they were positive on the whole it was agreed that the council must keep up momentum on this campaign.

The Clerk had researched Survey Monkey and had established the annual subscription of £384 including VAT. This would be useful for community engagement throughout the year.

**Resolved:** to purchase Survey Monkey. Cllr Nicholls abstained from the vote.

Members discussed a survey to be released throughout Powys to establish background data to support the campaign for NHS dental provision.

**Resolved:** Clerk to contact all members to ask for questions for inclusion in the survey. Survey to be developed and released, if possible, before Christmas 2020. Cllr Nicholls abstained from the vote.

b) **A Curtis – Possible Grant Funding**

A suggestion was received from Mr Curtis about the Town Council liaising with PCC about the match funding available for regeneration as a replacement for European funding.

**Resolved:** to contact Powys County Council Regeneration Department to ask them to keep the Town Council informed on any possible grant funding opportunities. Clerk will confirm this action to Mr Curtis.

c) **Census Engagement Manager – 2021 Census**

An introductory email from Huw Davies, the Census Engagement Manager indicating he wishes to engage with the Town Council with regard to the 2021 Census.

The Clerk had met with Mr Davies remotely earlier that day and he is keen to meet remotely with the Town Council as their input is crucial.

**Resolved:** to arrange a meeting for Tuesday 5th January 2021 at 6.30pm to be hosted by Huw Davies.

**TC 173/20 Planning Applications**

None.
TC 174/20  **Applications for Financial Assistance**

a)  **Radnorshire Wildlife Trust Volunteers**

Cllr Meredudd and Weerdmeester-Price declared an interest in this matter and left the room whilst discussions took place.

Application for the purchase of plants, compost and plant supports for public gardens. A previous grant had been awarded in September 2019.

Members felt that this group of volunteers work extremely hard to keep the wildflower garden looking lovely.

**Resolved:** to award a grant of £250. The Chair will also donate £100 in support of this groups great work.

TC 175/20  **Finances**

a)  **To approve the payments for November 2020**

The accounts were approved and signed.

b)  **Expenses/Budget to 30.11.20**

Noted.

TC 176/20  **Budget 2021/22**

The Clerk presented the budget to the Council commending members for their individual input into this important process. A great deal of consideration had been taken to ensure that no additional financial pressure would be placed on local residents following a difficult 2020. Despite this, monies had been placed in the budget to facilitate several new projects for 2021 and to ensure that all service costs will be met.

Members agreed that a robust budget had been set for 2021/22

**Resolved:** to set a budget of £161,096 based on a Band D Product of £2420.93 equating to an individual household levy of £66.54, a reduction of 10.99% on 2020/21.

TC 177/20  **Climate Emergency – Confirm Declaration**

The Chairman reminded members that the Council had agreed to work on the Climate Emergency project in November 2019 and asked members to re-affirm the designation of a Climate Emergency.

**Resolved:** the Council re-affirmed its declaration of a climate emergency and committed to continue working on this project.

The Clerk had forwarded the Action Plan to Renew Wales and some minor additions had been suggested which had now been completed in conjunction with the task & finish group. The Council awaits contact from Renew Wales in order to progress the project.

TC 178/20  **Co-option**

The Chair had been in contact with One Voice Wales with regard to the co-option process. The Clerk had previously stated that the Council is not permitted to hold interviews for applicants. This was confirmed by One Voice Wales, however, it is possible for candidates to make a short presentation to the Council in open session.
This was discussed at length and members agreed this is a good idea.

The Clerk also suggested that a questionnaire be sent out to anyone wishing to apply for completion and submission with their application. This was also agreed.

One Voice Wales had also suggested that voting should be undertaken by show of hands and not a secret ballot. Some members were not comfortable with this idea. In order to implement this there would need to be an amendment to Standing Orders.

The Clerk will research Zoom to see if it is possible to carry out a vote which is visible only to the meeting host during remote meetings.  

**Resolved:** To develop a questionnaire to be provided to prospective applicants and include the NALC Person Specification Sheet for information. Also to allow candidates up to 5 minutes to make a verbal presentation to full council.

The current vacancy for East Ward will be held back until February 2021.

**TC 179/20 Update on Skate Park**

The Chair informed members that the initial agreement with PCC to extend the lease area for the Town Council to create a new Skate Park was in January 2020. Since then the Clerk had continued to email PCC Legal Department to ask them to progress this amendment. Despite continual pressure, no further progress had been made. The Clerk had involved Cty Cllr Peter Roberts and Clive Pinney, Head of Legal Services over the last few months.

This has delayed the project by 9 months to date and has led to considerable time being wasted when contractors could have been measuring up and planning the site and the Committee could have been applying for grant funding.  

**Resolved:** to write to Clive Pinney, Head of Legal Services, to ask him for confirmation in writing that the land will be assigned to the Town Council, this would then enable to Council to move forward with this project.

The Clerk thanked all members for their hard work during 2020 and for bringing new project ideas to the table, many of which are now being progressed.

The Chair closed the meeting by thanking all members for their hard work and commitment to the Council over the last 12 months and for their enthusiasm and support. He wished all present a merry Christmas and a happy and healthy new year.