

Finance and General Purposes Committee – 1st February 2021

BUDGET FOR 2021/2022

Acting Town Clerk's Report

Overview.

The financial year 2020 -2021 has been like no other year in living memory. The Council, in keeping with the nation and indeed the world, has witnessed unprecedented challenges and changes, brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic. Social restrictions, lockdowns, and home working have become the new normal. The social changes and restrictions introduced during 2020 have curtailed much of Bangor City Council's budgetary plans. As a result the City Council is going to experience a significant underspend for the current financial year and a decision will be required as to what to do with these funds.

1) Review of Council Prices, Charges and Rents

- (a) **Penrhyn Hall:** The booking for Penrhyn Hall has, overall, increased steadily over the periods of the year when the Hall was allowed to be open. A mobile 75" monitor has been purchased, which allow greater flexibility for the Council and other users. The Hall continues to be promoted and it is envisaged that a steady but noticeable increase in income will be experienced at the conclusion of social restrictions. No price rises are currently recommended to encourage greater use.

No. of sessions	1	change	2	change	3 (full day)	change
Weddings	£50	-				
Rehearsal	£25	-				
Local Groups/Charities	£25	-	£33		£42	
Business/Others	£60	-	£90		£105	+\$5
*with Kitchen facilities	£10	-	£15		£20	-
Block bookings by negotiation						

RECOMMENDED: that these charges continue in the 2021/2122 financial year:

(b) Bangor Pier:

	2020/21	2021/22
Kiosk Rental	£635 pa	£635
Entrance Kiosk Rental	£370 pa	£370
Pavilion Café	£5,000 pa ¹	£5,000 pa
Car Park	£2.00. ²	£2.00
Car Park Overnight Parking	£5.00. ³	£5.00
Pier Entrance	50p and 20p consc.	50p and 20p consc.

* While the lease for the Pier Pavilion was agreed, the occupation was not taken up primarily due to the Covid pandemic.

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² This fee was increased part way through 2020-2021.

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Due to the ongoing works and loss in footfall during 2018/19, it is not recommended that any price increases take place for the forthcoming financial year. Annual leases/licences include mandatory opening times/hours. The Pavilion will be subject to a new Agreement following its re-build.

RECOMMENDED that the Rents, Pier entrance and the Pier car park charges be approved for the forthcoming financial year.

2) Capital Works at the Pier

During 2020-2021 phase four of the Pier renovations to replace defective steel in the superstructure and painting underneath the timber decking was completed. The cost of this work was reduced from its original budget of £200,000 and was completed inside the revised budget of £170,000. This phase was funded by a combination of Bangor City Council funds and a ten-year Public Works Loan Board loan of £50,000.

Phase five and six of the original renovation plans remain outstanding, and it is envisaged that external funding will be required to fund these phases. One such source could be the Heritage Lottery, have communicated an invitation to re-submit an Expression of Interest for such funding. CADW have confirmed that it is still willing to match fund any lottery grant with £50,000.

Before the commencement of phases, five and six regular maintenance of the Pier will continue, which will include the replacement of some decking and the painting of kiosks.

Work to install a pumping station and waste pipe from the Pavilion to the mainland has been stalled by a combination of planning application issues and the pandemic. However, permission was granted by Natural Resources Wales to continue to use the toilets, in their current set up, until the pipe has been completed. Funds for this upgrade have been allocated during this financial year and therefore will not have an impact on 2021-2022.

Damage to the railings, which edges the Pier car park, which occurred in 2019, is currently being repaired and will be completed in this financial year. Insurers have already released funds to pay for this.

As this report goes to press, it has become apparent that the landing stage at the end of the Pier, which was not included in the original renovation plans, is deteriorating rapidly. This deterioration increases the risk both to the landing stage and to the Pier itself. The cost of repairing this landing stage is roughly £40,000. This has not been taken into account in the 2021-2022 budget.

RECOMMENDED: That this Council consider allocating £40,000 from this year's surplus budget to repair the landing stage to reduce the risk to the Pier. That the City Director be tasked with obtaining external funding on preparation for phase five and six of the renovations and that regular maintenance, as included in the budget, be approved.

3) Other Property Matters

During 2020 the Council established an Asset and Greening Committee, with a view to preparing a strategic approach to the Council properties. It is envisaged that over the coming year this Asset committee will prepare recommendations to Council on how best to maximise the value of these assets. This year's budget includes £10,000 for this committee to utilize to fulfil its objectives.

RECOMMENDED: the Asset & Greening committee be given funds to allow them to obtain specialist advice and assistance to assist in preparing its recommendation.

The details below on Council property are included for guidance on the budgetary requirements of each asset in the coming year and are not intended to overlap with the plans or initiatives of the Asset and Greening Committee.

Much of the regular and planned maintenance work was curtailed during 2020. However, overall, the Council's estate is in good overall condition:

- **Nantporth Football Stadium.** Leased to Nantporth CIC – Rent review and site report being undertaken by specialists. This has been delayed due to pandemic but is expected in the coming weeks. A Council Nantporth committee has been established to oversee the Council's relationship with Nantporth CIC.
- **Hafan Community Centre for the Elderly and Disabled.** Leased to Age Cymru Ynys Môn a Gwynedd.
- **Pier Master's House, Garth.** This building is located on a low cliff immediately above the high-water mark. Plans to underpin the property during 2020 to secure it, following coastal erosion has been deferred. This work is now budgeted in 2021-2022.
- **Pier Workshop Building.** There are no major issues here.
- **Town Clock.** Works to repair the Town Clock were not completed in 2020 and have therefore been budgeted to be completed in 2021.
- **Penrhyn Hall.** The external fabric of the hall is generally in good condition. There are no significant works to be undertaken.
- **Mayor's Parlour.** There are no significant works to be undertaken.
- **Council Offices.** The first and second floor above the Council offices are divided into self-contained offices, which share a communal entrance. The first-floor offices were let in late 2019 and the tenant has expressed the wish to remain for at least another year. Discussions are underway with a prospective tenant to use the second-floor offices as an 'escape room'. The combined rental from these tenants will notably increase the Council's revenue from this building. The Council will need to decide whether to agree to the second floor being used as an escape room.
- **Bus Shelters.** Regular repairs and painting have taken place over the year and this programme is set to continue through 2021-2021.
- **Council Services.** Discussions have begun with Gwynedd Council regarding the maintenance of outdoor spaces in the City. The result of these discussions, in all likelihood, will entail the City Council carrying out more maintenance than previous years. Resources will need to be available for this to happen both in terms of machinery/tools and staffing resources. Some provisions have been made in the 2022/2022 financial year's budget for the above requirements.

4) Woodland Maintenance.

There are two woodland areas in the City Council's ownership, Menai Woods, Holyhead Road and Penrhyn Arms Woods, Bangor Mountain between the lower part of the High Street and the Bangor Golf Club. Regular maintenance will be required to Menai Woods, but Penrhyn Arms represents a potentially significant liability to the Council. Councillors will recall that one tree was uprooted in this area in 2018, causing houses to be evacuated and significant disruption. Regular checks are undertaken of both woodland areas by Council staff and expert advice is sought whenever it is felt necessary.

- **Menai Woods.** Some tree surgery and emergency work will be carried out during the next financial year to make the area safe for both pedestrians and motorists. However, there is unlikely to be any financial investment required.
- **Penrhyn Woods/Bangor Mountain.** This site continues to cause concern and while some funding has been included in the budget for maintenance work, the Council needs to be aware of the continued liability caused by the woods on this site. The last report received

confirmed that some twenty trees in Penrhyn Arms woods are in danger of breaking during periods of heavy weather.

5) Open Spaces and Play Areas

- **Ashley Jones Field.** This is the proposed location for the Japanese Sakura trees. Once details are finalised, some preparatory groundwork will be required prior to planting. This is the proposed location to place the community orchard of 20 fruit trees.
- **Dargie Fields.** This area is largely overgrown with evidence of discarded needles, glass and other refuse in the grass. The Council will need to decide what it plans to do with the area and the Asset and Greening committee are looking at options for consideration.
- **Play Areas.** Both City Council sites had RoSPA inspection and report. Essential maintenance including standard maintenance, replacement parts and vandalism issues has carried out at both sites.

RECOMMENDED: that funds be set aside for the necessary works as contained in the budget schedules.

6) Town Centre Initiatives

Most of the initiatives to assist the High Street have had a disappointing 2020. The continued impact of the closed road adjacent 164 & 166, together with economic depression resulting from social restrictions and Government lockdowns, has hit Bangor High Street hard. Work has begun within the Council on preparing a Vision of Bangor and the newly appointed City Director will be at the heart of this project.

- **The Weekly Market**
The Friday market has been postponed since March 2020, with little certainty as to when it can recommence.
- **Bangor Strategic Partnership Group**
The Bangor Strategic Partnership Group met regularly throughout the year and it attempting to launch a number of promising initiatives, which would assist the regeneration of the City. However, these projects are taken a long time to progress.
- **Bangor Image Group and Business Improvement District (BID)**
The City Council has, over the last twelve months, generated closer links the BID, Gwynedd Council, and the University to a view to forging closer partnerships. This has been aided by new appointments at the BID, the University and Economic and Community Department of Gwynedd Council. Unfortunately, the BID manager, who was appointed early in 2020 has now left and the future of the BID is in doubt. Bangor City Council should be prepared to pick up the slack in the event of the closure of the BID or renew the relationship if it continues.
- **Christmas Lighting**
A modest budget line of £2,500 has been included to begin the replacement and repair of ageing Christmas lights. This sum can be added to from the Bangor Market fund to improve the visual festive illuminations.
- **Gwynedd Services – Public Rights of Way (PROW) maintenance**
The City Council has maintained certain Public Rights of Way (PROW) in the City for many years through a reimbursement scheme. The reimbursement has been cut severely by Gwynedd in recent years; however, the City Council continues to deliver the PROW maintenance service.

8) Staffing

The appointment of the City Director will increase the productivity of the Council administration from the two days per week worked by the Acting Town Clerk.

Due to the impact of the pandemic, the Council did not employ the two seasonal workers during the growing season, as in previous years. This had a positive impact on the overall budget line but increased the pressures and workload on the existing staff. With the likelihood of additional work from Gwynedd Council and a backlog of existing projects, there is a clear need for additional resources during the growing season this summer.

RECOMMENDED: that the City Director be given the authority to appoint two temporary workers in consultation with the Mayor/ Deputy Mayor and Chairman of the Staffing Panel.

One of the major changes to Council business of the last twelve months was the establishment of the Covid-19 Support Committee. This committee has supported groups who aided the community. Since April 2020 the committee has awarded over £18,000 to community groups. The future of the pandemic and the needs of the community are, at this point, unclear. The optimism surrounding the national programme of vaccination is being tempered by stubbornly high levels of infection. Therefore, to give the Council flexibility to assist the community further, a budget line of £17,000 has been included in next year's budget.

RECOMMENDED: to approve the inclusion of the Covid-19 support budget line.

**Martin Hanks
Acting Town Clerk/RFO**

January 2021