

Ilston Community Council Annual Report 2021/2022

Forward

The Local Government (Wales) Act 2021 statutory guidance imposes a duty on all community and town councils to produce an annual report.

This will be the first such report for Ilston Community Council and my colleagues and I see this as an exciting opportunity to increase our contact with residents to not only maintain the area as a great place to live, do business and to visit but to encourage you to engage in local democracy. What do you want us to do for you?

The statutory guidance also imposes responsibilities on councillors as individuals. These include continual professional development and a requirement to integrate other legislation in our plans and activities eg Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, and Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

We are of course the lower tier of local government in Wales, but are the eyes and ears on the ground so to speak. Where possible, we deal with matters ourselves. If not, we raise issues to Swansea City Council (known as the Principal Authority). We do this via the appropriate council officers or through our new Ward Councillor (Pennard) Lynda James with whom we are already establishing a healthy working relationship

Your Councillors

Dale Ponting (Chair) Penmaen

Roy Church (Vice Chair) Parkmill West

Sue Mobbs Parkmill East

Helen James Ilston

Audrey Elliott Ilston

Nick Huffer Nicholaston

Nigel Hollett Penmaen

Cody Bates Penmaen

Steve Pleydell Penmaen

The Clerk to Ilston Community Council is Mrs Charlotte Toft

Clerk.ilstoncommunitycouncil@gmail.com

Councillor profiles can be found on our website

<https://ilstoncommunitycouncil.com/>

We currently have two vacancies in Ilston ward, one of them following the recent resignation of much respected and long serving Councillor Jen Griffiths for personal reasons and one in Nicholaston ward.

At the local elections in May 2022 a number of councillors stood down after many years of valued public service. We thank all of them for their past commitment and wish each of them well for the future. These being Mrs Frances Owen-John, Mr John Howells, Mr David Llewellyn, Dr Jerry Kingham and Mr Viv Jones.

CURRENT WORK GROUPS REPRESENTING ACTIVITIES AND OBJECTIVES OF THE COUNCIL

We have some long-standing work groups and a number of new ones.

Planning Cllr Audrey Elliott (lead) Cllr Nigel Hollett.

Finance Mrs Toft (Clerk) and Cllr Dale Ponting.

Training Cllr Helen James (lead) Cllrs Cody Bates and Dale Ponting.

Traffic Cllr Cody Bates (lead) Cllr Roy Church, Cllr Steve Pleydell and Cllr Sue Mobbs.

Environment Cllr Sue Mobbs (lead) Cllr Nick Huffer.

Communications Cllr Steve Pleydell.

Community Council Forum Cllr Helen James

Swansea Area Committee Cllr Dale Ponting

The main objectives of the community council and progress towards them are as follow;

- 1) Reorganisation of business model to ensure compliance with the Welsh Government Statutory Guidance.

The above working groups have been formed and leaders appointed. The objectives for each group have been agreed and action plans formulated. Many of these are time critical and driven by the statutory guidance. For example, a training plan, record of training and councillor activity list have been completed and are available for inspection on the enhanced web site. <https://ilstoncommunitycouncil.com/notices/> Another example being the requirement to engage with the community. To this end the website has been completely rebuilt and updated and multi-location meetings have been held since May of this year in accordance with legislation.

A number of councillors have already attended a range of training courses appropriate to their roles. The training and councillor activity record and will shortly be available on the website

We are also integrating other strategic objectives of the Welsh Government.

The first being the Wellness of Future Generations (Wales) Act.

We are exploring ways to make this a better environment for young people not just those who live here but for individuals to work in or visit the area.

We will actively address important community infrastructure including transport and meaningful employment opportunities. We will seek to engage with planners to ensure there is viable and sustainable affordable housing. We will balance the needs of a thriving resident community and those who own second homes in the area. We recognise the need to support and value community assets (not necessarily owned by the community council) including Penmaen and Nicholaston Village Hall and the Barham Centre in Parkmill as well as churches and other places of worship.

We will also continue to encourage the obvious sense of pride in community that already exists.

The above in many ways links to the second key strategic piece of Welsh Government legislation namely the Environment (Wales) Act.

We are mindful that a sustainable and healthy environment is a cornerstone for developing a better place for future generations. We have tasked The Environment Working Group with identifying not only what is going wrong eg destruction of habitat by unnecessary mowing

and use of herbicides, high levels of traffic pollution etc but also identifying good practice and green opportunities. This is likely to include more efficient use of public transport as a baseline. The above is not a wish list but examples of how we are required to integrate our decision making.

ACHIEVEMENTS OVER THE PREVIOUS 12 MONTHS

The transition from covid 19 restrictions over the last 12 months has been gradual and as a community council we have maintained supporting frameworks where necessary including the helpline and structures for supporting those in need.

The community council identified encroaching Japanese knotweed in Ilston and Three Cliffs Valleys. As a result, the principal authority are treating the areas in a coordinated approach over the next two years.

Concerns have been raised about both speeding traffic and frequent unacceptable congestion on the A 4118 especially through the village of Parkmill . Also, more generally along the entire 2-mile length of road between Kilrough Manor and Nicholaston where we have identified several collision hotspots. Understanding the principal authority have many competing demands the community council have taken the following actions.

1 installed a speed monitoring sign at bottom of Penmaen Hill eastbound. We plan if feasible and finance permitting, to place another westbound near the Gower Inn. The devices also provide traffic flow and speed data.

2 The community council commissioned a traffic survey for the residents. When the results are analysed and added to collision data, they will be used to provide evidence to the principal authority for appropriate road safety measures to be implemented. There was a remarkable survey response of 30 %. This highlights the value of community councils who are in touch with their communities.

We will also review signage and road markings.

This work and other matters relating to road safety on the A4118 are carried out by members of the Traffic Work Group. Much of this work is

incredibly detailed and methodical thanks to the professional skills of councillors involved on the work group.

It is important to be reminded that these people are bringing very high-level professional skills and knowledge for the benefit of our communities at no cost.

The principal authority we understand have difficulty in recruitment and retention of suitably qualified senior highways staff. Highways do not hold their own budget. This creates challenges for all concerned.

We have worked with the National Trust who have now blocked off the land used for indiscriminate parking at the west end of the Penmaen loop road. The National Trust intend to re-green the area and plant trees.

We obtained funding for the 'Keep Gower Tidy' signs you will have seen in the area.

During the lockdowns the Community Council made donations to Matthews House who provide meals for people in need and to Swansea Women's Aid.

Penmaen Nicholaston and Perriswood have been particularly affected by an unacceptable number of disruptions in water supply. The community council arranged a public meeting in June 2022.

Welsh Water was represented by their Head of Business Improvement Mr Jon Taylor. Mr Taylor disclosed that the area has one of the most disrupted water supplies in Wales due to historic lack of investment. Mr Taylor pledged resources and investment of almost three quarters of a million pounds on behalf of Welsh Water to replace the worst affected pipework by April 2023.

We were also delighted that Welsh Water have responded very positively to our request to be included in their 'Fair water' compensation scheme. As a result, they have suspended water supply rates from 1st April until further notice for those households and businesses most affected. The sewage element of the rates will still be applied. This is an exceptionally positive outcome for a small community

council and we will continue to liaise with Welsh Water for the underlying supply problems to be resolved as soon as possible. To their credit Welsh Water have been helpful and responsive.

There have been ongoing concerns about illegal overnight parking of motor homes and rough camping as well as the use of off-road motor cycles on Cefn Bryn in summer months. This has led to feelings of concern by some residents. The community council are in regular dialogue with police and the principal authority. Vehicle prohibition and police warning signs have been placed at two main access points to Cefn Bryn resulting in a marked decrease of unlawful traffic and camping in the vicinity. The principal authority ward member is also liaising with the Gower AONB Steering Group to identify solutions to what is acknowledged as a Gower wide issue.

Day to day councillors deal with the principal authority and other public bodies to make them aware of community concerns, for example the diminishing road surface at Lunnon Hill, overhanging and dangerous trees, damaged public footpaths and access gates. They also monitor the quality of local water courses where there are concerns during periods of high rainfall affecting Parkmill and Pennard Pill down to Three Cliffs Bay.

A long running concern is the potholed surface at Tor View car park. After many months of requests and the community council offering to meet part of the cost, temporary patching was helpfully financed by the principal authority representative for what was at that time the adjoining Pennard Ward.

We have also liaised with the public health department of the principal authority who have proved helpful and proactive in dealing with reports of unlicensed vendors.

Planning Applications. The Community Councillor scrutinises dwelling and commercial development plans and make recommendations in line with the published local plan and planning regulations. We also take account of public comment and opinion. This area of business is led by the Planning Work Group.

The planning department of the principal authority appear to be in a similar situation to the highway department. We do our best to work together under sometimes challenging circumstances. Planning decisions on almost all but the largest applications are delegated to the Swansea planning officers. The final appeal on planning matters lies with the Welsh Government.

Fly tipping is a re occurring issue in Lunnon and Ilston we have worked with the principal authority to remove refuse and monitor the situation. Casual littering is an issue on the coast paths and access to beaches. The community council have installed public signage urging visitors to take their rubbish home and had refuse bins relocated where they are most effective.

PRIORITIES FOR THE YEAR AHEAD

The world is going through a turbulent period with many uncertainties and the councillors are mindful that local authority resources will be put under further pressure.

We are starting our planning and budget cycle ensuring the objectives for the coming year are realistic, achievable and prioritised in order of positive impact on the community.

The Traffic Working Group will remain a priority with the aim of increasing road safety, and improving the environment for all residents' businesses and visitors. We are pragmatic that not all improvements can be actioned but our intention is to put together strong well evidenced proposals.

Our environment is under pressure from all sides. As a community council we will do our best to retain the environment at the core of everything we do.

We will continue to monitor the water supply situation in the Penmaen Nicholaston and Perriswood areas to ensure Welsh Water make good their promise to replace failing supply pipes.

We will continue to evolve our communication with the community and listen to what you say.

BUDGET

Given financial pressures on households this year any decision by this council to increase the precept would have to be justified by significant planned and properly costed requirements as part of the planning cycle. The Community Council will undoubtedly need to look at other forms of funding including Welsh Government Grants, lottery funding and where appropriate, sponsorship.

The council came in under budget in 2021/2022 leaving a surplus.

The audited accounts for the last financial year can be accessed via the following link.

<https://ilstoncommunitycouncil.com/notices/>

Whatever the year ahead throws at us the members of Ilston Community Council are committed to playing our part in making the area a great place to live visit and do business.

Dale Ponting

Chairman Ilston Community Council.

(September 2022)