OFFICER STATEMENT

FINANCIAL REQUEST – NARBERTH & DISTRICT COMMUNITY & SPORTS ASSOCIATION (BLOOMFIELD HOUSE) – EOM 260421

This statement is issued by the Town Clerk in their capacity as Proper Officer and Responsible Financial Officer following the Extraordinary Meeting held on 21st April 2026 concerning a financial request from the Narberth & District Community & Sports Association (NDCSA), the organisation responsible for the management of Bloomfield House.

The meeting included public participation, during which representations were made, including by Mr. W. Silverstone, who spoke in the capacity of a member of the public.

Mr. Silverstone is understood to be a designated spokesperson for the Narberth & District Community & Sports Association (NDCSA / Bloomfield House). Previous opportunities had been made available for the organisation to engage directly with the Council through formal meeting processes.

During that contribution, a number of statements were made regarding the conduct, impartiality, and professional actions of the Town Clerk, as well as references to the Council's recent triennial audit findings, the handling of the agenda and minutes, and matters relating to member interests. For clarity and accuracy, the following points are recorded:

1. Officer Role and Advice
The Town Clerk, as Proper Officer and Responsible Financial Officer, is required to provide advice that is lawful, evidence-based, and consistent with statutory duties and audit requirements.
All advice provided to Members in relation to the financial request was based on external professional guidance, including advice obtained from recognised sector bodies.

2. Financial Due Diligence
At no point has the Town Clerk alleged fraud or impropriety in relation to financial information provided by the NDCSA.

Requests for supporting financial information, including confirmation of current cash position, form part of standard due diligence when public funds are being considered for allocation. This approach is applied consistently.

3. Audit Commentary – Clarification
During public participation, reference was made to the Council's triennial audit and an assertion that findings were primarily attributable to the performance of "the Clerk".

For clarity:

- The audit referenced relates to a reporting period that **predates the current Clerk's appointment**.
- The current Clerk took up post on 1st July 2025.

- Audit findings relate to **historic governance and financial control arrangements**, and not solely to any individual.
- In local government, governance and financial management are exercised corporately by the authority as a whole, with officers acting in an advisory and administrative capacity. Responsibility for governance arrangements, financial controls, and compliance therefore rests with the Council collectively, rather than with any single officer.
- Since appointment, work has been undertaken to address governance, audit, and compliance matters in line with professional guidance.

This clarification is provided to ensure that the public record accurately reflects the distinction between historic matters and current officer responsibility.

4. Process and Agenda Management – Clarification
During public participation, it was suggested that aspects of the agenda, minutes, and handling of the item had the effect of "frustrating" consideration of the Bloomfield request.

For clarity:

- The preparation of agendas and minutes is undertaken by the Proper Officer in accordance with statutory requirements and Standing Orders.
- Agenda wording is structured to ensure that **all lawful options remain available to Members**, including the ability to determine whether or not to approve a request.
- The inclusion of wording such as "to determine the amount, if any" reflects standard governance practice and is intended to preserve decision-making flexibility, not to pre-determine an outcome.
- The sequencing and handling of the item, including requests for supporting financial information, were undertaken to ensure that any decision made by Members was **lawful, evidence-based, and capable of withstanding audit scrutiny**.

The Proper Officer does not have authority to determine the outcome of an item and does not seek to influence decisions beyond the provision of professional advice.

5. Member Interest – Clarification
During public participation, reference was made to a potential conflict of interest involving Cllr. Tomos Williams-Mason.

For clarity:

- The matter of interests was addressed during the meeting itself.
- Cllr. Williams-Mason confirmed that:
  - His connection to Bloomfield was limited to prior membership and participation in a community choir using the facility
  - He had sought advice from the Monitoring Officer in relation to his position
- Determination of whether a personal or prejudicial interest exists is a matter for the individual Member, guided by the statutory Code of Conduct and, where necessary, advice from the Monitoring Officer.

For completeness, it is noted that declarations of interest were made and managed during the meeting in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, including the withdrawal of Members where required.

No further comment is made on individual Member positions.

6. Decision-Making

The decision taken at the meeting was made by Members of the Council following consideration of the advice available to them, including external professional guidance, and was informed by the advice of the Proper Officer.

<u>**The Clerk does not participate in decision-making and has no vote.**</u>

7. Conduct of Public Participation

Public participation is an important part of local democracy. However, it is expected that contributions:

- Are made respectfully
- Are factually accurate
- Do not include unsubstantiated personal allegations

Where concerns exist regarding officer or member conduct, these should be raised through the Council's formal procedures.

8. Next Steps

Following the meeting, the Proper Officer will be reviewing meeting procedures and governance controls to ensure that future proceedings are conducted in a manner that is orderly, fair, and consistent with the Council's statutory responsibilities.

Kris O'Kane
Town Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer
Proper Officer to Narberth Town Council

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Issued in the capacity of Proper Officer under the Council's governance and administrative functions.