

Penrice Community Council: Submission to Review of Communities - Nov 2023

Context

The Gower Peninsular is predominately a rural area of scattered villages and each rural council is centered on one or more village within the wider landscape. Gower is fully covered by Community Councils so any adjustment of boundaries would affect more than one Community.

The current arrangement is long established and has remained consistent through several reviews.

Penrice Community Council remains part of the Gower Ward of the City & County of Swansea and borders the newly defined Pennard Ward.

Historically Penrice was an important centre for the area but over time it has been superceded by Horton and Oxwich as the main settlements.

After considering the terms of the review (including the Council Size Policy of the City & County of Swansea) and the needs and current arrangements of the Community, the Council submits that there be no changes to the current arrangements.

Consideration of Boundaries - potential significant changes

Penrice Community Council was established to reflect the pattern and history of settlement in the wider rural area and is therefore a small Council as far as the electoral population is concerned. This is considered to be positive for the convenience of local people and the effectiveness of the Council particularly when enhanced by working with other local Community Councils.

There is a good ratio of Councillors to electorate, the Councillors are within the local community often sharing the same issues, meetings are held locally and the matters considered are focused on the local area without the distraction of unrelated matters.

As a small Council it can be very specific in representations to the proper authorities but it also networks with other local Councils where there are shared concerns and to have greater impact.

The Council has the benefit of an experienced Clerk but for limited hours. It enhances its budget by sharing tasks within the Council (eg managing its own website) and by accessing grants (eg for defibrillators). It works with volunteers in the community (eg for biodiversity) and supports community groups (eg to gain grants).

With the support of local people the Council owns and manages two open green spaces and through the Council local people determine how they are used. In addition to general recreation they are used for community events and to support charities.

In these circumstances Council submits that it should continue as a small Council without significant changes in boundaries.

Consideration of Boundaries - potential small changes

There are clear boundaries around much of the community (the coast to the south and east, a controlled break in development to the west of Horton) and a strong historic relationship between specific areas which has influenced the other existing boundaries - eg between Little Reynoldston and Penrice. The Council therefore supports retaining these boundaries.

In some areas the boundaries of our community abut isolated properties or settlements in neighbouring communities. The Council would consider any representation to include these properties.

Consideration of Councillor Number

The Council has 9 Councillors whilst the Swansea Council Size Policy recommends 7.

Because of the way the Council works it benefits from this number of Councillors. It also allows a meaningful split across Wards.

The Council has not had any difficulty in recruiting Councillors. There have been occasional co-options over the years. There have been unopposed seats. This reflects the community approach to the Council. People tend to come forward if there is a vacancy but not to challenge others already in place.

Council favours no change in the number of Councillors.

Consideration of Wards

The Council is split into three wards - Horton, Oxwich (also covering surrounding hamlets) & Penrice (combined with Little Reynoldston).

These wards do represent meaningful sub-sets of the community. The structure is clear for local people. It also helps keep balance within the Council both in terms of representation and when managing conflicts of interest affecting a specific locality.

A purely numerical allocation of Councillors would not take account of some of the nuances in the area. Retaining two Councillors for Penrice gives the area meaningful representation within the wider Council. With closer ties between Penrice & Oxwich (eg the community hall in Oxwich is the Oxwich & Penrice Youth Hall) there is then a reasonable balance between these two areas and Horton.

Council recommends retaining the 3 Wards and the current allocation of Horton (4), Oxwich (3) & Penrice (2).

The Council will consider this matter again should the decision be taken to reduce the number of Councillors to 7.

Consideration of Names

Council supports the retention of the current names for the Community and for its Wards.