

MUCH WENLOCK TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
held at The Guildhall, Much Wenlock
7 pm on Thursday 1 October 2015

PRESENT:

Cllr. Yvonne Holyoak (Chairman), Cllr. Robin Bennett, Cllr. Bert Harper, Cllr. Mary Hill, Cllr. Mike Grace, Cllr. Dafydd Jenkins, Cllr. Paul Laming, Cllr. David Turner, Cllr. Joffrey Watson, and Cllr. Milner Whiteman OBE.

TOWN CLERK:

Sharon Clayton

IN ATTENDANCE:

4 members of the public

1) CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

The Mayor gave a verbal report of her Mayoral engagements during September as follows:

- Presentation evening at William Brookes Academy
- McMillan Coffee Morning in Holy Trinity Church, and walkabout town wearing Mayoral chains
- Mayor of Ludlow's Cheese and Wine evening in the Assembly Rooms
- Mayor of Wem's Civic Service in parish church
- Presentation by Army at Lilleshall on rehabilitation of armed forces
- Coffee Morning for Windmill Trust in Holy Trinity Church
- Induction of new Rector of Longden and Hanwood at Anscroft Church

2) APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence since all Members were present. However, Cllr. Joffrey Watson apologised that he had to leave at 8:30 pm due to commitments.

3) DISCLOSURE OF PECUNIARY INTERESTS

Members were reminded that they are required to leave the room during the discussion and voting on matters in which they have a disclosable pecuniary interest, whether or not the interest is entered in the register of members' interests maintained by the Monitoring Officer.

As a Shropshire Councillor Cllr. David Turner declared an interest in any matters relating to Shropshire Council, and as a Member of the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership Management Board, in any matters relating to the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

This declaration was NOTED.

4) DISPENSATIONS

None requested.

Cllr. Mike Grace arrived at this point in the meeting.

In accordance with Standing Order no: 10(a)(vi) the Chairman proposed that the order of business be changed, and after being seconded it was **RESOLVED** that agenda item no: 16 be considered following public participation.

5) PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Mayor invited a local resident to speak about antisocial behaviour caused by residents at Darwin Place, Smithfield Road. Members were informed that residents had been heard shouting and swearing, and demonstrating other anti social behaviours such as throwing rubbish into neighbouring gardens which could have caused harm. These have been regular occurrences during the summer. Following on from their letter to the Town Council the Council was asked to support local residents in asking the owners of Darwin Place to ensure that their residents were suitability assessed before being placed in accommodation within a residential area.

The residents were asked whether the police had been called and they said that the police had attended to help with an incident on one occasion.

The Mayor thanked residents for bringing this matter to the Council's attention and told them that Members would consider how the Town Council might be able to assist.

6) LETTER OF CONCERN

Members had received a letter of concern from residents of Southfield Road asking for support from the Town Council to resolve the issue of antisocial behaviour caused by residents of Darwin Place. Some Members of the Town Council had visited residents to listen to their concerns and had been informed that a meeting had been arranged between residents and the management of Darwin Place to discuss how these issues might be resolved.

Members expressed concern about the suitability of the location for this home for challenging people which was within a residential area and agreed that these behavioural issues were not fair on local residents. Residents were advised to keep a log of events as evidence and it was proposed that the Town Council should write to the management at Darwin Place and alert them to these issues and ask how they would be resolved.

Shropshire Councillor David Turner advised that Shropshire Council had no direct involvement other than to ensure that the owners of Darwin Place were licensed. He said that he would attend the meeting arranged for local residents and recommended that there was nothing further the Town Council could do. However he would mention at the meeting that the Town Council had considered the matter and he would also talk to Shropshire Council about any requirement for a licence for Darwin Place.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that the Town Council should write to the owners of Darwin Place and express concerns about the distress being caused to local residents.

7) MINUTES

- a) The minutes of a Town Council meeting held on 3 September 2015 were considered for approval.
It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that the minutes be signed and ADOPTED as a true record.
- b) The minutes of a Finance & Resources Committee meeting held on 21 July 2015 were **NOTED and ADOPTED**.
- c) The minutes of a Personnel Committee meeting held on 20 July 2015 were **NOTED and ADOPTED**.

8) TOWN CLERK'S REPORT

- a) Members received a written report from the Town Clerk on outstanding matters and action taken since the last Council meeting.

The Town Clerk added the following verbal report:

- She had been informed by the Friends of the cemetery that Edge Renewables had kindly agreed to supply some wood chippings to be laid on the paths at the cemetery which would make them less uneven and more user friendly.
- The Casual Vacancy caused by the resignation of Cllr. Robert Toft had been advertised by the Town Clerk by a notice dated 10 August 2015 and local parishioners had until 28 August 2015 to call an election. The Town Clerk was notified by Shropshire Council a few days before this deadline that a valid call for an election had been received. However Shropshire Council's Notice of Election was not received by the Town Clerk until 21 September 2015 and the deadline for nominations was 4 pm on Friday 2 October 2015.

The election was to take place on 29 October 2015. The Town Clerk was questioned as to why the vacancy had not been publicised on notice boards and in the press as agreed by the Town Council. The Town Clerk explained that the press had been informed, the notices were displayed on Town Council notice boards but she did not have access to any other notice boards. The Town Clerk also said that all the information was on the Town Council website.

- The architect appointed to design an extension and internal refurbishment for the cemetery chapel had completed the plans and the quantity surveyor had prepared a budget estimate for the works. The Town Clerk informed Members that these should be considered in conjunction with the Action plan for discussion at agenda item number 13.

The Chairman reminded Members that they were invited to attend a reception at the Guildhall on 2 October 2015 at 6 pm for the exhibition of paintings by Sarah Yates.

It was **PROPOSED**, **SECONDED** and **RESOLVED** that the Town Clerk's report be **NOTED**.

- b) Members received a copy of the minutes and associated information from a Market Town Clerk's meeting held on 15 September 2015. Items discussed included:
- Tourism and marketing of towns
 - Pupil forecasting
 - Local commissioning update
 - Town and parish council update
 - Place Plans

It was proposed that the Town Council should have a conversation with Shropshire Council about future commissioning to explore what both councils could do together.

It was **PROPOSED**, **SECONDED** and **RESOLVED** that:

- i. **The information be NOTED.**
- ii. **Cllr. David Turner would broker a meeting between the Town Council and Shropshire Council to discuss future commissioning once negotiations concerning Shropshire Council's offer of the youth club building and associated land were concluded.**

9) REPORT FROM SHROPSHIRE COUNCIL

Cllr. David Turner presented a verbal report as follows:

- **“WW1 remembrance** - 25th September 1915 was Shropshire's second worst day in the Great War. 91 men remembered on Shropshire memorials lost their lives on that day. In all 111 men were killed in this week, among them Rifleman Ernest James of the Rifle Brigade buried at Ploegstreet Memorial, and Private Henry Sankey of The King's (Liverpool Regiment) buried at Cambrin Military Cemetery. Both of them are on the memorial at Much Wenlock, and on Wednesday 30th September I attended the Great War Remembrance Service at St Chads Church in Shrewsbury to commemorate these men.
- **Affordable housing** - Back in August in response to an article written by the Civic Society, I wrote in the Wenlock Herald, about Shropshire Council's resistance to a government directive regarding affordable housing contributions. Shropshire Council's approach is that each new house build attracts an affordable housing contribution. This recognises the unique character of our beautiful rural county which attracts new developments of larger properties. Shropshire Council's Core Strategy policy CS11 requires that all new housing makes an appropriate contribution to local needs affordable housing, in recognition of our acute and particular affordable housing pressures. It is clear from the many viability studies undertaken that, in the vast majority of Shropshire building plots, there is adequate value in the deal to make this contribution. Shropshire Council believes that the approach it has taken has been carefully considered and is fair and appropriate to Shropshire.

I am pleased to advise Shropshire supported West Berkshire District Council and Reading Borough Council in their recent high court challenge. In short, the judge has found that the ministerial statement was unlawful and the relevant sections of the PPG have now been removed from the DCLG website. Legally we are being told that we can now apply full weight to our Core Strategy and the Housing SPD. This is particularly relevant to Much Wenlock current affordable housing project.

- **Bus service** - There has been some recent criticism locally of the 436 bus service. As you know GHA has taken over the service from Arriva and inevitably there have been some teething troubles. In response to passenger suggestions, the last bus out of Shrewsbury is a little later to help commuters. Overall, however, I've received unsolicited compliments which seem to point towards general satisfaction – clean buses, friendly drivers and a punctual service.
- **Highways** - You have seen various notifications about road resurfacing – in summary:
Oakfield Park Much Wenlock – 28th September to 2nd October
B4378 Bourton Road Much Wenlock - 1st to 9th October
Wilmore Street Much Wenlock – 18th to 25th October
Barrow Street Much Wenlock – 26th October to 1st November
Vineyard Road Homer – 2nd to 13th November
Merrywell Lane Much Wenlock – 11th to 27th November

During the course of the Wilmore Street/Barrow Street works, free off-street parking will be provided for local residents in these streets. I remain concerned that I'm not getting the responses I want about traffic issues generally including HGVs, and I have a meeting with the Town Clerk and Shropshire Council next week to move things forward.

- **Car parking** - As you know, there's pressure on car parking in the town. It's a complicated issue with residents, shoppers and tourists competing for convenient free space to park their cars. The Neighbourhood Plan provides for consideration to be given when commenting on planning applications.

There have been a number of suggestions from residents and traders alike that they should benefit from permanent free off-street car parking. There is no such thing as "free car parking" – someone is paying for it – either the ratepayer, the driver or, in some towns the traders. In Much Wenlock the headline figures for Shropshire Council's four car parks in total (St Mary's Lane, Falcons Court, New Road and Back Lane) is £46k income and about £15k in expenditure, meaning about £31k net surplus. Removal of the charges would inevitably mean that money would have to be raised elsewhere, or services cut. In due course and once the interminable discussions on the youth club building are concluded, Shropshire Council will want to enter into discussion with the Town Council about a number of services, including car parking."

It was AGREED that this report be NOTED.

10) AUDIT

- a) Members received a financial report from the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) which outlined why some budget headings were over budget. The report also summarised the findings of the internal and external audit reports.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that the report be NOTED.

- b) Members received a copy of the completed Annual Return which included the external auditor's comments. The RFO explained that the external auditor had queried the Asset Register which had consequently been reviewed to be compliant with proper practices. Any property which has been given to the Council should have a value of £1 only and all purchased property should remain in the Asset Register at the purchase price. Guidance states that "Once recorded on the asset and investments register, the recorded value of assets and investments must not change from year to year until disposal". The outcome of the external audit was that the information in the Annual Return was in accordance with proper practices.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that the auditor's comments be NOTED.

- c) Members received a copy of the latest internal audit report.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that the internal auditor's report be ACCEPTED.

- d) Members considered for approval the Finance & Resource Committee's recommended response to the internal auditor.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that the recommended response to the internal auditor be APPROVED.

11) FINANCE

Members received income and expenditure from 1 April to 31 August 2015.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that the income and expenditure to the end of August 2015 be NOTED.

12) REPRESENTATION ON COMMITTEES/WORKING GROUPS/OUTSIDE BODIES

Following the resignation of Cllr. Robert Toft Members considered for approval his replacement on the following:

- a) Community Flood Action Group.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that Cllr. Mary Hill be appointed to represent the Town Council on the Community Flood Action Group.

- b) Priory Hall Management Committee.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that this appointment would be considered further once the Casual Vacancy had been filled.

13) QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY 2016

Cllr. Yvonne Holyoak asked Members to suggest how the Town Council might commemorate the Queen's 90th birthday in 2016. She asked Members to give it some thought for further discussion at the next meeting.

It was proposed that the Town Council could work with the Wenlock Festival and that one large event would be better than lots of smaller ones.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that ideas should be discussed further at the next meeting.

14) ACTION PLAN

Members received a report from the Town Council's Action Plan Monitoring Working Group which set out the following recommendations:

Cllr. Joffrey Watson left at this point in the meeting.

- a) That the Town Council sets up a working group (taking relevant expert advice) to consider works to the Guildhall/Buttermarket in greater depth, building on previous work/studies and sets out proposals for its long-term maintenance, improvements and enhanced use. This should include a consultation with the community on the proposals and options.
- b) That the Town Council has a clear agreement with the Gaskell Recreation Ground Management Committee of the Action Plan for enhancing use of the Ground by March 2016, and prior to completion of the transfer of the youth club building and associated land the Town Council discusses devolution of the management of the youth club to the Gaskell Recreation Ground Much Wenlock (charity) and re-development options for the pavilion with the sports/cricket clubs.
- c) That the Town Council asks the Finance & Resources Committee to take the opportunity to have an 'in the round' discussion with Shropshire Council concerning potentially devolved services, brokered by Cllr David Turner, to consider a package of community facilities/budgets for the benefit of the town.
- d) That Food Fairs should continue as planned, delivered by the Town Clerk with support from Councillors in an attempt to increase the use of the Corn Exchange market area. The Finance & Resources Committee to review success.
- e) To continue to take publicity opportunities as they emerge to better market the town of Much Wenlock, its unique character and amenities. The Town Council to offer £500 from its grants budget to the Chamber of Trade as a commission to undertake further marketing to and monitoring of visitors (subject to general agreement of proposals and evaluation of success/failure).
- f) Continue to support the community to bring the cemetery chapel back into use.
- g) In order to address parking issues in the town and parish to continue to make proactive submissions and support the efforts of Shropshire Council to deliver solutions; quarterly reporting from the Town Clerk with feedback from Shropshire Council/Cllr Turner. Consideration of planning applications should carefully consider the likely impact of development.
- h) That the Neighbourhood Plan Monitoring Panel be asked to review progress across all Neighbourhood Plan objectives as well as housing delivery/numbers.
- i) That the Town Council seeks monthly updates from Shropshire Council about flood management via the Flood Action Group.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that:

- i. **The above recommendations be APPROVED.**
- ii. **A Guildhall working group be established with a town councillor and volunteers from the local community.**

15) MUCH WENLOCK NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN MONITORING PANEL and

16) PLANNING

Members considered for approval a proposal by Cllr. David Turner, supported by Cllr. Mike Grace and Cllr. Yvonne Holyoak which outlined the work of the panel to date. Two and a half years into the Plan period, housing completion numbers were running ahead, pro rata. There had been no progress on employment land at Stretton Road. There was presently no fixed template for Neighbourhood Plan reviews and Much Wenlock was still a front-runner in this respect. Shropshire Council had recommended that reference to the Neighbourhood Plan's policies should be noted in the Town Council's minutes so that these references could be used as evidence in the Plan's review.

In accordance with Standing Order no: 10(a)(vi) the Chairman proposed that the order of business be changed, and after being seconded it was **RESOLVED** that agenda item no: 17 be considered at this point in the meeting.

Cllr. Mary Hill, Chairman of the Planning & Environment Committee proposed that Cllr. Turner retract item 2(b) in the report. 2(b) stated: "Whilst the Town Council's Planning Committee uses the Neighbourhood Plan in assessing planning applications it is not always evident in the comments submitted to Shropshire Council. Written reference to individual policies is encouraged and, where appropriate, to the Design Statement".

Cllr. Hill said that the Committee always referred to the Neighbourhood Plan when considering and responding to planning applications, and gave an example where the Committee had objected and, even though the Committee had quoted relevant Neighbourhood Plan policies, Shropshire Council had granted permission. Cllr. Hill said that the Neighbourhood Plan could not be quoted for all planning applications. Other Members of the Committee supported Cllr. Hill's statement and it was proposed that the local member (Cllr. David Turner) should be alerted to the Committee's concerns so that he could request applications to be called in. Cllr. Hill also informed Members that the Committee had concerns about a planning application at Stretton Road and had asked for a site meeting with the planning officer and the applicant.

It was RESOLVED to NOTE that the Planning & Environment Committee already refers to the Neighbourhood Plan's policies when responding to planning applications and PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that the Committee should provide feedback to the Monitoring Panel on practical application of the Neighbourhood Plan.

17) FLOOD REPORT

Members were informed that the Chairman of the Community Flood Action Group had informed the Town Clerk that the Group had not met and therefore there was no report this month. However, a meeting would be prompted as soon as the Town Council nominated a representative from the Town Council to join the Group.

Concern was expressed about the August 2015 "Rapid Response Briefing Note" from the Environment Agency which identified 380 homes as being deemed at risk of fluvial flooding from the Shylte Brook.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that a more detailed and larger scaled map identifying properties at risk from flooding be obtained from the Environment Agency and the Agency should be asked what factors enabled them to identify 380 homes.

At this point in the meeting it was PROPOSED, SECONDED and unanimously RESOLVED to revoke Standing Order no: 3w and continue with the meeting.

18) CONSULTATION

- a) Members considered a proposal by Cllr. Milner Whiteman that the Town Council should respond to Shropshire Council's consultation on its proposals to close Buildwas Primary School on 31 August 2016 due to its underperformance and declining pupil numbers. He expressed concern about what impact a closure would have on Much Wenlock Primary school which had requested another classroom and had been denied.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to object to the closure because Much Wenlock Primary School is the nearest school to Buildwas and was already under pressure. Furthermore an increase in pupil numbers might affect the high quality of education within Much Wenlock.

- b) Members also considered a consultation concerning the exemption of parish councils from paying business rates on public conveniences.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that NALC be supported in its campaign to exempt parish councils from paying business rates on public conveniences.

19) ELECTIONS 2017

Members considered a proposal by Cllr. David Turner that the Town Council should devise a communication strategy to raise awareness of the role of the local councillor as a community leader with an emphasis on the May 2017 elections.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that the Town Council should devise a communication strategy this year to raise awareness of the role of the local councillor as a community leader with an emphasis on the May 2017 elections.

Due to his interest declared earlier Cllr. David Turner left at this point in the meeting.

20) YOUTH CLUB BUILDING AND ASSOCIATED LAND TRANSFER

Members considered for approval what further action to take following receipt of further information from the solicitor and Ground Control Surveys concerning the transfer of the Youth Club building and associated land from Shropshire Council to the Town Council.

Concern was expressed that Shropshire Council would not agree to remove or reduce the covenant restricting use of the youth club building to community use. It was proposed that Shropshire Council should provide an explanation as to why it would not reduce the restriction from 12 to 6 years. Members had agreed that if the Town Council could not provide a successful community facility within the first few years of taking over the building then neither could anyone else. Further concern was expressed about the wooden pavilion and its close proximity to the school which posed a fire risk.

It was **PROPOSED**, **SECONDED** and **RESOLVED** that:

- i. **Shropshire Council should be asked why it was insistent on enforcing the covenant and to provide examples for what it considers to be community use.**
- ii. **The solicitor should be asked to arrange for a water and drainage search to be carried out to show the positioning of the Severn Trent pipes at a cost of £250 + VAT.**
- iii. **A site meeting should be arranged with the solicitor and councillors in order to reassure the Town Council of what responsibilities it would be taking on concerning drainage and sewage and also to explore whether the sewers could be adopted by Severn Trent.**
- iv. **The threshold for flooding of households should be determined for insurance purposes.**

21) CORRESPONDENCE

The following correspondence was received:

- a) SALC information bulletins and other information.
- b) Invitation to attend the SALC AGM on Saturday 31 October 2015 at the Brookside Community Centre, Bembridge, Brookside, Telford.

It was **AGREED** that the correspondence be **NOTED**.

22) AGENDA ITEMS FOR NEXT TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

It was **AGREED** that the agenda for the next Town Council meeting should include consideration of a letter from a local resident suggesting that an exhibition be held to display gifts and artefacts presented to the Much Wenlock Male Voice Choir on its travels.

23) DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was **NOTED** that the next meeting would take place on Thursday 5 November 2015.

The meeting closed at 21:50.

Signed.....

Date.....

Cllr. Yvonne Holyoak
Town Mayor