

MUCH WENLOCK TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
 held at The Guildhall, Much Wenlock
 7 pm on Thursday 14 January 2016

PRESENT:

Cllr. Yvonne Holyoak (Chairman), Cllr. Robin Bennett, Cllr. Graham Edgcumbe Venning, Cllr. Mike Grace, Cllr. Bert Harper, Cllr. Mary Hill, Cllr. David Turner, Cllr. Joffrey Watson, and Cllr. Milner Whiteman OBE.

TOWN CLERK:

Sharon Clayton

IN ATTENDANCE:

CSO Mike Watkins
 Chris Edwards, Area Commissioner Shropshire Council
 6 Members of the public

1) CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME AND REPORT

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. She informed Members that she had written to Cathie Sabin to congratulate her on her recent award of the OBE in the 2016 New Year's Honours. She also advised that there would be a further consultation event for affordable housing in Much Wenlock on 3 February 2016.

The Mayor gave a verbal report of her Mayoral engagements since the last meeting as follows:

- Mayor of Telford & Wrekin Carol Service
- Hanwood Day Centre Christmas lunch
- Town Council Christmas dinner
- Much Wenlock Christmas Fayre – including road stewarding and visiting all stalls
- Mother's Union Christmas lunch
- King Arthur performance at Ludlow Assembly Rooms
- Fire Service Carols
- Christmas tree festival
- Carol Service and lunch at Drapers
- Much Wenlock Primary School Fair
- Christmas Carol service and reading at Holy Trinity Church
- Visit to residents at Lady Forester to wish them a 'Happy Christmas'

2) APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The following apologies were received:

COUNCILLOR	REASON FOR ABSENCE
Cllr. Paul Laming	Holiday
Cllr. Dafydd Jenkins	Work commitments

Cllr. Milner Whiteman and Cllr. Joffrey Watson also apologised that they would be late arriving due to prior engagements.

These apologies were **CONFIRMED** as **APPROVED** absence.

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.

Cllr. Mike Grace also declared that, although he did not have a pecuniary interest, he would not participate in discussions at agenda item 21 due to his friendship with Cathie Sabin.

These declarations were NOTED.

4) DISPENSATIONS

None requested.

5) POLICE UPDATE

The Chairman invited CSO Watkins to give an update from the police. CSO Watkins said that he'd done some backtracking on reported crime and, other than the recent break-in at Northwoods which was still outstanding, on the whole things were really quiet. He talked about vehicle theft and how some thieves had been caught. There had been several incidents at the Corn Exchange but the new CCTV system had proved to be really useful in helping police with their enquiries.

The Chairman thanked CSO Watkins for the update after which he left the meeting.

6) DEVOLVED SERVICES

The Chairman invited Chris Edwards to inform Members about how Shropshire Council would be interested to learn whether the Town Council was willing to take on any devolved services since Shropshire Council was becoming a commissioning council. Services for discussion include car parks, the library, the museum, street lights, and open space. He gave examples of how other town councils had taken on services, such as their local library. He said that Shropshire Council was open to suggestions/ideas and explained the process from the initial dialogues to the formal decision and transfer. If the library service in Much Wenlock was to remain with Shropshire Council the hours would need to be reduced in order to save money. A full consultation with the community would be carried out and analysed by Shropshire Council. Existing staff would be protected by TUPE and Shropshire Council would take responsibility for all staff involved. Shropshire Council would like the Town Council to set up a small working group to negotiate with Shropshire Council. It was anticipated that it would take 12 months from the initial discussions to the final transfer.

Cllr. Milner Whiteman arrived at this point in the meeting.

Members identified an understanding of the importance of demand and local need for services and Mr. Edwards was given a copy of the principles for negotiations between the two councils agreed by the Town Council. The Town Council would need to look at the way it would deliver any additional services as well as its present services and Mr Edwards was asked for information on demand/need for services and their likely costs. Mr Edwards said that Shropshire Council would pay existing staff on a 3-year contract after which the situation would be reviewed.

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

Shropshire Council would still support the library in terms of IT equipment, staff training, books etc. The Town Council would be the front service of the library.

Car parks could transfer on a 125-year lease, for example, or whatever term the Council would like if interested. Shropshire Council could take over maintenance of street lighting currently maintained by the Town Council. Consultation should reveal whether community groups would be able to manage some or all of the services on offer.

The Chairman thanked Mr Edwards for attending the meeting after which he left.

Members considered for approval the establishment of a small working group, as recommended by Shropshire Council, who would negotiate with Shropshire Council and report back to the Town Council.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that:

- i. A working group should be established whose Terms of Reference would be information gathering and reporting back to the Town Council.**
- ii. Members of the working group would comprise Cllr. David Turner, Cllr. Yvonne Holyoak, Cllr. Bert Harper, and Cllr. Graham Edgcumbe Venning.**

7) PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no requests to speak from members of the public.

8) MINUTES

- a) The minutes of a Town Council meeting held on 3 December 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 Planning & Environment Committee meetings held on 29 September, 3 November, and 1 December 2015 were **NOTED** and **ADOPTED**.
- c) The minutes of a Finance & Resources Committee meeting held on 24 November 2015 were **NOTED** and **ADOPTED**.
- d) The minutes of a Personnel Committee meeting held on 20 November 2015 were **NOTED** and **ADOPTED**.

9) TOWN CLERK'S REPORT

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

The Town Clerk reported that she would be making a start on raising awareness of standing for election and a community engagement strategy was under development.

Concern was expressed about flooding on the Gaskell Recreation Ground following the recent heavy rain. The Town Clerk reported that some volunteers had put some dye in the drains to determine where the water was coming from and further investigations were to be carried out. The Gaskell Recreation Ground Management Committee was working with the school to identify funding streams that would assist with drainage problems.

The Town Clerk informed Members that she had been informed by the Civic Society that people were concerned that the bus continued to have difficulty turning round at the Queen Street bus stop due to obstructive parking and that there were no yellow lines to prevent parking in areas which needed to be clear to allow the bus to manoeuvre. Cllr. David Turner agreed to pursue the matter with Shropshire Council.

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

10) REPORT FROM SHROPSHIRE COUNCIL

Cllr. David Turner presented his monthly report as follows:

- **Highway** - Tomorrow there is a consultation event at Priory Hall from 12:30 until 7:30pm in respect of the reactive traffic light proposal for HGVs on A4169 Sheinton Street. The Town Council gave its support to the indicative proposals in February 2015, following a meeting I arranged between Shropshire Council, Mouchel and Cllrs Harper and Holyoak on 3rd February 2015. I urge you to go along and see the detailed proposals and make your comments – and also to encourage others to attend. The consultation material will be at the library next week as well.

In response to the Town Council's decision not to support my proposal to identify what it wants to achieve in respect of traffic issues I've met with the highways team today. They believe that they can't do much without a clear indication from the Town Council about the outcomes it hopes for. I too, don't want to initiate expensive work by consultants on schemes if they don't have the support of the Town Council.

- **Flood management** - Much Wenlock's surface water flooding problems have been addressed in Shropshire Council's "Integrated Urban Drainage Management Plan". This specifies two flood attenuation ponds, to hold floodwater back at The Sytche and Stretton Road. They have planning consent and negotiations are proceeding well to secure the land. Funding has been secured and work is expected to commence on these ponds at the end of this year.
- **Shropshire Council leadership** - You will be aware that there has been a change of leadership at Shropshire Council. All councillors, including town and parish councillors, undertake to observe a Code of Conduct that sets out the standards to which they should adhere in carrying out their duties. I, of course, endeavour to uphold this - and I fully support the recent turn of events at Shirehall.

I have, for personal reasons, declined to serve in Shropshire Council's new Cabinet despite being supportive of its new leader, Cllr Malcolm Pate.

- **Advice surgery** - My next advice surgery will be held on Saturday 23rd January at Shipton Village Hall when I will be accompanied by an Easthope, Shipton & Stanton Long parish councillor and a representative of the police."

11) PRECEPT 2016/2017

Members considered for approval the draft budget for 2016/2017 as recommended by the Finance & Resources Committee. The Chairman of the Finance & Resources Committee, Cllr. Robin Bennett, informed Members how the Committee had arrived at its recommended budget. The Committee did not think it appropriate to budget for devolved services when the Town Council had no idea what costs were involved at this stage. However, £50,000 was already earmarked for property and another £20,000 was included in the 2016/2017 budget. The recommended precept was an increase of 1.569% and for a Band D property equated to an additional 97 pence per annum per household.

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

- i. **The precept for 2016/2017 should be set at £180,307.**
- ii. **A press release should be issued.**

12) FINANCE

- a) Members received a financial report from the Responsible Financial Officer which outlined the Town Council's financial status from 1 April to 30 November 2015. The report included a separate analysis of income and expenditure for the Gaskell Recreation Ground for the same period.

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

- b) Members received a report on income and expenditure to date from 1 April to 30 November 2015. The Chairman of the Finance & Resources Committee, Cllr. Robin Bennett explained that expenditure to date was within budget but there was no room for leeway to the end of the financial year.

It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** that the income and expenditure to date be **NOTED**.

13) QUEEN'S 90TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

Members considered how the Town Council could mark the occasion of the Queen's 90th birthday. The Chairman advised Members that she had discussed with the church the possibility of purchasing some interpretation panels.

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

- i. **The Town Clerk should ask other councils what they were doing to mark the occasion.**
- ii. **Gift ideas should be discussed at a future meeting.**

14) ARCHIVIST REPORT

At the last Town Council meeting Members agreed a recommendation from the volunteer archivists that the first minute book of the Borough of Wenlock should be conserved. Members received a further comprehensive report from one of the volunteer archivists which outlined the origins of the minute book which dated back to 1496 and contained minutes up to 1658. Its leaves were made with paper and bound in a strong vellum binding. It had survived for over 500 years but, due to damp conditions, the book was stained and weak and needed to be conserved.

The Town Clerk informed Members that the volunteer archivist had drafted a letter to send to neighbouring parish councils which were once included in the Borough of Wenlock asking if they would like to make a financial contribution towards conservation of the minute book.

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

- i. **The Town Council should not ask for financial contributions at the present time.**
- ii. **The Town Clerk and Cllr. Mike Grace should have a discussion with the Volunteer Archivists concerning how to move forward with plans for the celebration and the conservation of the minute book.**

15) FLOOD REPORT

There was no report from the Community Flood Action Group although a response had been received from Shropshire Council confirming that it would work closely with the developer of the site proposed for the development of affordable housing to ensure that suitable measures would be put in place to reduce existing flood risk. The Environment Agency had also informed Shropshire Council that it was expecting the local water quality to reach good status potentially in 2024 following Severn Trent Water undertaking necessary work at the local sewage treatment works.

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

- i. **The information be NOTED.**
- ii. **The Community Flood Action Group should be informed of the responses received.**

16) PLANNING

- a) There were no planning applications referred by the Planning & Environment Committee to the Town Council or to Shropshire Councillor David Turner.

NOTED.

- b) The Chairman of the Planning & Environment Committee informed Members how, at its last meeting, it had considered the application for a Lawful Development Certificate at the Presthope Caravan site. The Committee had expressed disquiet to Shropshire Council about the application which sought to put static caravans on the site which had previously housed touring caravans. The Committee had deemed this to be a Change of Use. However, the planning officer at Shropshire Council had advised the Committee that the application was essentially a matter for legal interpretation rather than one that looks into the merits of the use of land.

The Chairman also informed Members about the Committee's concerns about traffic movement during the restoration of habitat at the disused quarry at Westwood Quarry, Stretton Westwood. The Committee had asked to see strict traffic management and did not support the works being carried out during the winter months due to mud on the road and the hazards this may create.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that Cllr. David Turner should be forwarded copies of the Committee's response to both of these applications.

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

17) CONSULTATION

Members considered an opportunity to submit issues of concern for debate by NALC's Larger Council's Committee.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that no action should be taken at this time.

18) CORRESPONDENCE

The following correspondence was received:

- a) Shropshire Association of Local Councils (SALC) information bulletins and other information sent to Members via email.

It was AGREED that the correspondence be NOTED.

19) SCHOOLS

Members considered a proposal by Cllr. David Turner that the Town Council should seek to establish a formal and regular dialogue with both Much Wenlock Primary School and William Brookes School on emerging issues of common interest. The Mayor informed Members that she had already visited both schools.

It was RESOLVED that the Town Council would seek to establish a formal and regular dialogue with both Much Wenlock Primary School and William Brookes School on emerging issues of common interest.

20) SHARED FACILITIES

Members considered for approval an invitation from Much Wenlock Medical Practice to share new facilities should a funding opportunity arise. The practice was keen to establish whether there would be any interest in the potential development of a shared facility for Much Wenlock that could incorporate Council facilities, the Medical Practice and other organisations (such as the chemist, dentist, and the police). The practice would also be contacting potential partners to ask the same question.

When funding opportunities arose the timescale for applications was often quite short and it was for this reason that the practice was seeking expressions of potential interest so that, should the opportunity arise and funding became available, the practice would be able to make a bid.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that:

- i. **The Town Council was interested for the time being but would like further details about the proposed site for development.**
- ii. **The Medical Practice should also be informed about the Town Council's invitation to take on devolved services from Shropshire Council.**

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

Cllr. David Turner and Cllr. Mike Grace left at this point in the meeting.

21) CELEBRATING EVENTS

Members considered for approval a proposal by Cllr. Milner Whiteman that local achievements should be acknowledged. The Town Clerk clarified that this was not in contradiction to the resolution made at the last meeting. Cathie Sabin, President of the Lawn Tennis Association had recently been awarded an OBE in the 2016 New Year's Honours for Services to Tennis, and the extremely popular Much Wenlock Christmas Fayre had been in existence for 14 years and its success was attributable to the Christmas Fayre Committee who had worked tirelessly over the years organising the event.

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

- i. Cathie Sabin and the Christmas Fayre should both be congratulated.
- ii. The Mayor should present both Cathie Sabin and the Christmas Fayre Committee with a Civic Gift at the Mayor Making ceremony in May 2016.

22) AGENDA ITEMS FOR NEXT TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

It was **AGREED** that traffic issues should be included on the next agenda.

23) DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was **NOTED** that the next meeting would take place on Thursday 4 February 2016.

The meeting closed at 21:09.

Signed.....

Date.....

Cllr. Yvonne Holyoak
Town Mayor