

MUCH WENLOCK TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
held at The Guildhall, Much Wenlock
7 pm on Thursday 15 January 2015

PRESENT:

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

TOWN CLERK:

Sharon Clayton

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mike Law – Shropshire Building Preservation Trust
1 member of the public

1) CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

The Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting. She said she had read a lesson at the church Carol Service during the Christmas period but, other than that, her Mayoral engagements had been quiet. She said that a member of the public had raised concern about the difficulty in getting appointments at the doctor's surgery and asked that anyone experiencing similar difficulties should inform the Town Clerk so that these concerns can be discussed at the next meeting of the Local Joint Committee.

The Mayor gave a special welcome to Mike Law, Trust Secretary of the Shropshire Building Preservation Trust. He had come to the meeting to present the Town Council with a cheque for £3,000 to put towards the cost of refurbishment of the Buttermarket railings and repainting of the walls. Mr. Law said the Trust had been running for around 30 years and had funded many building projects. The Trust bought buildings, restored, them and then sold them on. He said that the Trust is not able to do that so much these days and, now that the Trust is being wound up, the remaining funds have been shared amongst those who the Trust thinks are worthy. He said there is a possibility that a few more pounds may be given to the Town Council once the Trust was finally dissolved. The Mayor thanked Cllr. Yvonne Holyoak for alerting the Town Council to this particular funding stream.

The Mayor thanked Mr Law for the kind donation after which he left the meeting.

2) APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr. Paul Laming who had work commitments.

This apology was ACCEPTED.

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.

In accordance with Standing Order no: 10(a)(vi) Cllr. Turner PROPOSED that agenda item number 20 concerning Shropshire Council's offer be considered as the last item since he had an interest.

It was unanimously AGREED to change the order of business so that agenda item number 20 be considered as the last item of business.

4) DISPENSATIONS

None requested.

5) MINUTES

- a) The minutes of a Town Council meeting held on 4 December 2014 were APPROVED following minor amendments at minute no: 7 to remove the words “thanked the Council for inviting him to the meeting and”, and to remove the word “our” at the second bullet point and replace it with “Shropshire”. The minutes of an Extraordinary Town Council meeting held on 6 January 2015 were also APPROVED.
It was RESOLVED that these minutes be signed and ADOPTED as a true record.
- b) The minutes of a Planning & Environment Committee meeting held on 4 November 2014 were NOTED and ADOPTED.
- c) The minutes of a Personnel Committee meeting held on 13 October 2014 were NOTED and ADOPTED.

6) REPORT FROM SHROPSHIRE COUNCIL

Cllr. David Turner presented a verbal report as follows:

- James Pearce, Royal Horse Artillery, of Bourton will be remembered at the WW1 Commemoration at St. Chad’s church in Shrewsbury on 4 February 2015.
- Broseley Town Council and Barrow Parish Council would like to widen the scope of the HGV ban and an extension of the 20 mph zone. There may be a greater chance of success if Much Wenlock was included.
- Shropshire Council’s position regarding its offer of the Youth Club building still includes the Town Council taking over the footpath for which there will be a commuted sum for its maintenance.
- At a meeting of the South Planning Committee Cllr. Turner had spoken against planning application 14/02390/FUL for the erection of two low profile wind turbines at Lea Quarry although the application has now been amended to one turbine for training purposes. He was confused as to why, at the same meeting, the Town Council’s representative had spoken in support of the application when the Town Council’s response to Shropshire Council had been ‘no objection’.
- The Neighbourhood Plan states that the Town Council should treat the Neighbourhood Plan as an Action Plan and after six months Cllr. Turner could not see any action. He suggested that a joint Shropshire Council/Town Council body, comprising officers and councillors, with a couple of interested community volunteers, should be set up to monitor the application of the plan in practice. He also suggested that the Terms of Reference for the Planning & Environment Committee should be reviewed so that the Committee was no longer responsible for the Plan.
- Cllr. Turner felt that the recent presentation to the Planning & Environment Committee from Persimmon outlining proposals for development at land off Bridgnorth Road should have been considered by full Council and said that the Town Council might wish to take a view in principle as to whether the Town Council should be facilitating development which is not in conformity with the Neighbourhood Plan and whether it should do so in any similar case in future.
- The next meeting of the Local Joint Committee will take place on 28 January and the agenda will include youth provision in the locality, a presentation about Shropshire Council’s wholly-owned business IP&E, and it is also hoped that someone from the medical practice will attend to talk about the challenges currently facing the health service.
- Following Barclays Bank’s announcement to close on Fridays from 2 February, and as a result of concerns expressed by some residents and High Street traders, Cllr. Turner had contacted the bank to inform them that people were opposed to it closing on a Friday. The bank had stressed their keenness to work with the community to reach agreement as to which day it should close.
- Cllr. Turner had informed Philip Dunne MP of concerns that the Post Office would be relocating to other premises which may not be in the High Street.
- The next advice surgery would be on 31 January at Much Wenlock museum.

It was RESOLVED that the report be NOTED.

7) PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

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

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 reminded Members that they were invited to attend a meeting in the Town Clerk’s office on Friday 16 January 2015 when Mark Davies from CCLA (Churches, Charities and Local Authorities) was coming to discuss how the Council can invest funds with CCLC.

It was AGREED that:

- i. **The Town Clerk’s report be NOTED.**
- ii. **Those who installed the Christmas lights on the Gaskell corner should be thanked for their efforts.**

As a Member of Shropshire Council Cllr. Turner was asked to leave the Council Chamber whilst the following was discussed.

9) PRECEPT

- a) Members considered a proposal by Cllr. Yvonne Holyoak and seconded by Cllr. Bert Harper, that the Town Council should consider the financial implications to the Town Council following Shropshire Council's decision not to pass on the Council Tax Support Grant (CTSG). The Town Council was expecting approximately £12,000 in CTSG, the loss of which would have a significant impact on the Town Council's budget.

The Town Clerk informed Members that they were invited to a special conference facilitated by SALC on 9 February 2015 to discuss Shropshire Council's proposals. SALC would then convey the strength of feeling from the meeting to Shropshire Council's Scrutiny Committee on 28 January.

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

- i. **Members of the public should be informed of the reasons why Shropshire Council was withholding the CTSG.**
 - ii. **Councillors would attend the SALC Conference on 9 February 2015.**
- b) Members considered granting retrospective approval for a letter sent to Cllr. Keith Barrow which expressed disappointment with Shropshire Council's decision not to pass on the Council Tax Support Grant from central government and use it themselves to make savings.

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

- i. **The letter be APPROVED.**
- ii. **The Town Council should write further.**

Cllr. Turner returned to the Council Chamber.

- c) Members considered for approval the draft precept for 2015/2016. Cllr. Yvonne Holyoak informed Members that the Finance & Resources Committee had voted for a stand-still precept but at that time did not know that the CTSG would not be forthcoming. Cllr. Holyoak **PROPOSED** and Cllr. Robin Bennett **SECONDED** that £12,000 be taken from the property budget to prevent an increase in the precept.

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

- i. **The precept be set at £177,520**
- ii. **A press statement be prepared for approval at the next Town Council meeting.**

10) FORWARD PLAN/ACTION PLAN

Members received a written report from Cllrs. Robin Bennett, Dafydd Jenkins, and David Turner, a task and finish group set up at the last Town Council meeting to formulate an Action Plan from the Forward Plan drafted by the Town Clerk which covered the period from 2014 to 2018. The task and finish group's report outlined a number of recommendations for developing an Action Plan.

It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED** and unanimously **RESOLVED** that the following recommendations be **APPROVED**:

- i. **The Town Council should re-focus the Forward Plan prepared by the Town Clerk so that it becomes a working action plan with its key purpose to motivate the Council to identify and action priorities for the benefit of the town.**
- ii. **The document be re-named "Action Plan 2015-2016" focussing on a 12-month plan of activity to go alongside the precept.**
- iii. **The Action Plan should become a standing item on Town Council agendas to enable the Council to check that identified priorities are being addressed.**
- iv. **Any actions listed should be timetabled.**
- v. **An associated smaller "Forward Plan" document be created by the Town Clerk containing a short-list of headline priorities (with outline timetable) to cover the rest of this Council's tenure.**
- vi. **A separate document be created entitled the "Asset Management Plan" to be overseen by the Finance & Resources Committee containing detailed information with only the 'headline' points to be brought back into the Action Plan.**
- vii. **Key priorities for the coming year are:**
 - **Refurbishment of Queen Street bus shelter**
 - **Repaint the walls of the Buttermarket**
 - **Increased use of the Corn Exchange market area**
 - **Better marketing of the town and its unique character and amenities**
 - **Better use of the Guildhall**

- Measure footfall every quarter to monitor and measure visitor numbers in the High Street and to the museum, Guildhall, library etc.
- Address traffic and parking issues in the town and parish in the round, seeking solutions that improve road safety.
- Encourage increased use of the Gaskell Recreation Ground by casual users and organised events.
- Develop use of the former youth club building for the benefit of the community and to generate income.

11) GRANT AWARD

In pursuance of LGA 1972 s139 (Acceptance of gifts and property) Members were delighted to approve the following:

- a) An offer of £3,000 in grant funding from the Shropshire Building Preservation Trust towards the preservation of the Guildhall.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and unanimously RESOLVED that the grant be ACCEPTED and ring-fenced for the refurbishment of the Buttermarket.

- b) A gift of £244 from someone who had exhibited paintings in the Guildhall. The gift was given to support the upkeep of the Guildhall. The Town Clerk informed Members that the donor had already been thanked for this kind gesture.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and unanimously RESOLVED that the gift be ACCEPTED.

12) MUCH WENLOCK ALMSHOUSES

Members considered the appointment of a member to represent the Town Council on the Much Wenlock Almshouses.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and unanimously RESOLVED that Cllr. David Turner represent the Town Council.

13) WENLOCK OLYMPIAN SOCIETY ARCHIVIST REPORT

Members received a report from the Wenlock Olympian Society Archivist. With the support of the Town Council and Much Wenlock Museum the Society had been able to maintain its unique archives and give access to a variety of groups, including a delegation from the Shanghai Sports administration and academic researchers. A number of events and presentations linked to the Archives had been held throughout 2014 and items had been added.

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

14) MEDIA POLICY

Members considered for approval a draft Media Policy as recommended by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC).

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and unanimously RESOLVED that, following agreed amendments, the Media Policy be APPROVED and ADOPTED.

15) GASKELL RECREATION GROUND

- a) Members considered for approval suggestions from the last meeting of the Gaskell Recreation Ground Much Wenlock charity. The suggestions covered management of the Linden Gate, control of bookings and collection of cash, and how the Ground should be managed and under whose responsibility.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and unanimously RESOLVED that the suggestions be supported and recommended to the Charity for approval.

- b) Members considered for approval the appointment of three Members to represent the Town Council on the Gaskell Recreation Ground Management Committee.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and unanimously RESOLVED that Cllr. Mary Hill, Cllr. Bert Harper and Cllr. Robin Bennett represent the Town Council on the Gaskell Recreation Ground Management Committee.

- c) Members considered for approval draft Terms of Reference for the Gaskell Recreation Ground Management Committee.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and unanimously RESOLVED that the Terms of Reference be recommended to the Charity for approval.

16) CODE OF CONDUCT

Members considered for approval an amendment to the Council's Code of Conduct to include a protocol for the use of email by councillors following the Independent Investigator's recommendation that a policy for email use should be adopted by the Council. The Town Clerk informed Members that proper use of email was covered in the following paragraphs:

“Valuing my colleagues and staff and engaging with them in an appropriate manner and one that underpins the mutual respect between us that is essential to good local government.” And “Always treating people with respect, including the organisations and public I engage with and those I work alongside”.

It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** that this item be withdrawn and no further action taken.

17) GUILDHALL

Members considered for approval the opening hours for the Guildhall for 2015.

It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and unanimously RESOLVED** that the Guildhall opening hours will remain the same as last year and throughout 2015 the Guildhall will be open between 11 am and 4 pm on Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday from April to October.

18) OPENNESS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Members considered for approval that, in the interests of openness and transparency, draft minutes and all supporting documentation for Council meetings should be published on the Town Council’s website. This would enable people to see information on which Town Councillors base their decisions. However, information that should be withheld in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 would be precluded.

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

- i. All draft minutes be published on the Town Council’s website
- ii. Supporting information, for Town Council meetings only, also be published on the Town Council’s website for a three month trial basis. The Town Council should be informed of the amount of time taken to publish this information in order to determine the cost in officer time.
- iii. The number of website visitors should be reported to the next meeting of the Town 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.

19) LANDOWNER LIQUID FERTILISERS LTD.

- a) Members received a briefing note from the Environment Agency concerning the inspector’s decision on Landowner Liquid Fertilisers Ltd. The inspector had ruled that the underground tanks pose a pollution threat to the nearby watercourse and ordered them to be emptied over a period of time. He also asked for a Risk Management Plan to be submitted including a scheme for emergency secondary containment. The Environment Agency has developed an emergency response plan with the Fire Service which will be put into action should an incident occur. The Environment Agency will continue to work with the operator to monitor the site and ensure that the inspector’s recommendations are complied with.

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

- i. The information be **NOTED**.
 - ii. Cllr. Bert Harper be thanked for his tenacity for the results achieved.
 - iii. The Town Clerk should write to Buildwas Parish Council and pass on the information received by the Town Council.
- b) Members received a response from the Health & Safety Executive concerning Landowner Liquid Fertilisers Ltd. stating that it has engaged with the Local Resilience Forum who will be sending a joint response to the Town Council concerning emergency planning matters in relation to the Landowner Liquid Fertilisers site.
It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and unanimously RESOLVED** that the Town Clerk should pass on the information to Buildwas Parish Council.

20) BARCLAYS BANK

Members considered the impact on the town following Barclays Bank’s decision to reduce its opening hours. Cllr. David Turner informed Members that he had written to Barclays Bank to express the concern of local residents. Barclays had said that, following consultation with some local traders, Fridays were very quiet and would be the best day to close. However, local traders had informed Cllr. Turner they were not content with this decision.

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

- i. The Town Clerk should write to the bank and ask that it stay open on Fridays.
- ii. The letter should be copied to Philip Dunne MP and the Chamber of Trade.

21) FLOOD REPORT

Members received a written report from the Community Flood Action Group. Additional funding has been approved to complete the two main attenuation ponds in Stretton Road and Sytche Lane, and Shropshire Council had confirmed that the land purchase is planned to be completed in March 2016 with construction of the two ponds planned for completion by March 2017.

Shropshire Council had also secured a further £138,000 towards sorting out the on-going issues in and around Hunters Gate although it would not be available until 2021, and the Action Group was disappointed that Shropshire Council has still not received the report from Severn Trent on these drainage issues. The Group cautioned supporting any further substantial housing development in or around Hunters Gate area until these flooding issues have been resolved.

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

22) CONSULTATION

Members received consultation on the following:

- Shropshire Council's Budget Proposals 2014/15 – 2016/17. Cllr. Turner took no part in the vote as to whether the Town Council should respond to this consultation.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that the Town Clerk should respond on behalf of the Town Council and object to Shropshire Council's proposal to reduce corporate support to town and parish councils through the withdrawal of the Council Tax Support Grant.

- Government consultation on whether council tax referendum principles should apply to highest spending parishes.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that the Town Clerk should respond on behalf of the Town Council and object to the proposals for parish councils to be subjected to a council tax referendum.

23) CORRESPONDENCE

The following correspondence was received:

- a) SALC information bulletin and other information.
- b) Letter of thanks from a local resident thanking the Town Council for supporting objections to development proposals at Wenlock Edge Inn.
- c) An invitation from the Oil Buying Club to attend a future meeting to inform the Council about its aims.

It was RESOLVED that:

- i. **The correspondence be NOTED.**
- ii. **Most people in Much Wenlock use gas and therefore it was AGREED that the Oil Buying Club should not be invited to a future meeting.**

24) PLANNING

- a) There were no planning applications referred by the Planning & Environment Committee to the Town Council for consideration.
- b) The Chairman of the Planning & Environment Committee, Cllr. Mary Hill informed Members that she and Cllr. Milner Whiteman had attended a meeting of Shropshire Council's South Planning Committee to support Edge Renewables proposals for a low profile wind turbine. Cllr. Whiteman informed Members that, as he left the meeting, he was confronted by several objectors who were quite rude to him, and he was most upset by the experience which he said was uncalled for and unnecessary.

NOTED.

25) AGENDA ITEMS FOR NEXT TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

It was **AGREED** that the following items should be included for discussion on the next agenda:

- Electronic agendas
- Post office relocation
- Personnel Committee review
- One-way system at King Street
- RPS proposals for land off the Bridgnorth Road

26) DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was **NOTED** that the next meeting would take place on Thursday 5 February 2015 commencing 7 pm at the Guildhall.

Cllr. Turner left at this point in the meeting.

27) SHROPSHIRE COUNCIL'S OFFER

Members were informed that Shropshire Council was insistent that the footpath and its future maintenance should be accepted by the Town Council with the rest of the offer and asked that the Council revisit its decision not to accept it. Shropshire Council had extended an invitation to the Town Council to discuss the matter further so that an amicable agreement could be reached.

The Town Clerk informed Members that she had met with Steve Brown who had said that most of the repairs highlighted in the recent property survey would be carried out by Shropshire Council, except for repairs to the boiler. However, Shropshire Council would provide a quote for a new central heating system, and a quote for a new boiler, so that the Town Council could decide whether it would be more economical to replace the system or repair the boiler.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that:

- i. The School should be asked what resources they would be prepared to put towards the maintenance of the path.**
- ii. A meeting should be arranged with Steve Brown.**
- iii. Shropshire Council's offer should be discussed at the Annual Town Meeting in March so that members of the community would have a chance to have their say.**

The meeting closed at 21:37.

Signed.....
Town Mayor

Date.....