

# MUCH WENLOCK TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a  
**TOWN COUNCIL MEETING**  
held at The Guildhall, Much Wenlock  
7 pm on Thursday 3 December 2015

## **PRESENT:**

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

## **TOWN CLERK:**

Sharon Clayton

## **IN ATTENDANCE:**

Rev'd Matthew Stafford  
PC Jane Cowan  
2 Members of the public

## **1) CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

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

- Holy Trinity Church coffee morning and town walk
- Shropshire Art Exhibition
- Remembrance Sunday at Holy Trinity Church
- Telford & Wrekin Council Remembrance
- Meeting with Chaplain, Rev'd Matthew Stafford
- Remembrance service at Corn Exchange
- Soup lunch
- Hospice Carvery evening
- Shipton Village Hall entertainment
- Wenlock Festival AGM
- Wenlock Olympian Society AGM
- William Brookes School J L Edwards Trust awards
- Christmas lights switch-on in Much Wenlock
- Ferret Racing in Bridgnorth
- Meeting with Chair of Much Wenlock Male Voice Choir concerning their artefacts
- Brockton School Christmas Fair
- Open Day with Shropshire Housing Group
- Surgery with Shropshire Councillor David Turner
- Visit with Philip Dunne MP

## **2) APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Cllr. David Turner who was on holiday.  
These apologies were **CONFIRMED** as **APPROVED** absence.

Cllr. Joffrey Watson apologised that he would be late due to a family commitment and Cllr. Paul Laming would also be late if he arrived at all due to a crisis which had just occurred.

## **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.

None.

**4) DISPENSATIONS**

None requested.

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

**5) POLICE UPDATE**

PC Jane Cowan gave an update from the police as follows:

A new IT system has been installed by the police which is proving to be very useful. The police already has a Twitter account which is constantly providing updates about their activities. The Shropshire Star has been using the Twitter account for their newspaper reports which the police have found to be beneficial in helping with their enquiries. One Tweet was very successful because someone the police wanted to question for anti social behaviour had been identified and subsequently found. The Town Council's new CCTV system had also helped the police to find someone who had thrown curry sauce on the windows of the library at the Corn Exchange. The culprit had been identified and subsequently caught by the police and spoken to. The police are now working with partner agencies to help those with behavioural problems.

PC Cowan was informed that the Cricket Club's store had been broken into and items stolen. PC Cowan said she knew that the premises had been broken into but did not know that items had been stolen. She said she would add this information to the crime report. She said that those people who are regularly acting in an anti social manner are being dealt with by the police who are working with partners such as the youth offending team. People can only be charged if it is proven that they have caused criminal damage. She added that Much Wenlock had a dedicated team and officers were more than happy to visit people when requested to do so.

The Chairman thanked PC Cowan for the update after which PC Cowan wished everyone a Merry Christmas and left the meeting.

**6) PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There were no requests to speak.

**7) MINUTES**

- a) The minutes of a Town Council meeting held on 5 November 2015 were considered for approval. Following an amendment at minute no: 24 to add the following –“A copy of the solicitor's advice be included with the next agenda”,  
**it was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that, with the inclusion of the agreed amendment, the minutes be signed and ADOPTED as a true record.**
- b) The minutes of a Finance & Resources Committee meeting held on 20 October 2015 were **NOTED** and **ADOPTED**.
- c) The minutes of a Personnel Committee meeting held on 20 October 2015 were **NOTED** and **ADOPTED**.

**8) 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 informed Members that the Council had agreed that 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 was concluded (minute no: 8b dated 1.10.15). The Town Clerk said that a meeting had been arranged by Chris Edwards to have initial discussions about asset transfers. The Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and the Town Clerk were invited to the meeting which would take place on 18 December 2015.

The Town Clerk also apologised to Members that she had forgotten to wish everyone a Merry Christmas from the Town Council in the latest edition of the Wenlock Herald but had arranged for posters to be displayed around the town conveying Christmas greetings and thanking all those who had helped with the Christmas lights display.

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

**9) REPORT FROM SHROPSHIRE COUNCIL**

In his absence Members received a written report from Cllr. David Turner as follows:

- **“The Big Conversation** - I recently wrote to each Town Councillor individually and would encourage you to respond to the consultation. The following two items put this into a wider context. The Chancellor of the Exchequer's Autumn Statement. (Lord) Gary Porter, Chairman of the Local Government Association, speaking on the day of the Statement said:

"Today's announcement on council tax will go some way to allowing a number of councils to raise the money needed to offset some of the cost of social care. The £1.5 billion increase in the Better Care Fund announced today is good news, but it's vital that this is new money and must be spent on adult social care." He continued:

"Even if councils stopped filling in potholes, maintaining parks, closed all children's centres, libraries, museums, leisure centres and turned off every street light they will not have saved enough money to plug the financial black hole they face by 2020."

- **Rural Services Network** - Shropshire Councillor Madge Shinton attended the Rural Services Network (which is chaired by Shropshire Councillor Cecilia Motley) in September 2015 and reported back as follows:  
"Parish and Town Councils are key players. Duty to precept for local need. Create Social Enterprises. Use local customs, history, wellness to facilitate plans. Develop[s] asset based Community development."  
(James Derounian BSc (Hons), MPhil, MRTPI, FHEA, FILCM, Principal Lecturer in Community Engagement and Governance, University of Gloucestershire) <http://www.rsonline.org.uk/images/Conferences/rural-conference-2015/presentations/James%20Derounian%20-%20Economy%20and%20Broadband.pdf>
- **Advice surgery** - My next advice surgery will be held Saturday 23rd January 2016 at Shipton Village Hall when I anticipate that I will be accompanied by an Easthope, Shipton & Stanton Long parish councillor and a representative of the police.

And finally...

I wish all of you a merry Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year.

## 10) THE BIG CONVERSATION

- a) The Town Clerk gave a brief verbal report from a clerk's meeting with Shropshire Council, as follows:  
Shropshire Council was currently consulting on the future of public services (The Big Conversation). Local commissioning includes the re-design of libraries and customer service points. Libraries would not be closed until all avenues had been explored. Shropshire Council would provide capacity building support. It might also adopt the community asset transfer approach to anyone expressing an interest in taking on green spaces. LJs (Local Joint Committees) were under review and Shropshire Council was considering how they could be better utilised.  
**It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that the report be NOTED.**
- b) Members considered a proposal by Cllr. Mike Grace, Cllr. Robin Bennett, and Cllr. David Turner suggesting how the Town Council should conduct its conversation with Shropshire Council concerning the future delivery of public services.

Concern was expressed about the Chancellor's latest statement which would allow local authorities to increase their precepts and keep revenue from business rates. They would also have additional funding from the government. It was PROPOSED that the Town Council should be asking Shropshire Council what it would be doing with this additional funding. This proposal was supported and it was further PROPOSED that this proposal should be discussed with Shropshire Council.

**It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that the following be APPROVED.**

**The Town Council agrees the principles set out in the report as the basis for guiding its discussions with Shropshire Council on the future delivery of public services in Much Wenlock.**

## 11) 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.

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

- i. In Cllr. Turner's absence, consideration of this proposal be deferred until the next meeting.
- ii. Cllr. Turner should be asked to define his proposal in greater detail.

## 12) FLOOD REPORT

Cllr. Mary Hill gave a verbal update following her attendance at the last meeting of the Community Flood Action Group as follows:

**“Flood Risks**

It is now over eight years since Much Wenlock was badly flooded in 2007 and we are still waiting for the agreed improvements to be put in place. The current timescale for the two attenuation ponds on *Stretton Road* and *Sytche Lane* is:

- Construction start around October 2016
- Completion around March 2017

For *Hunters Gate*: £138k has been allocated to resolve the outstanding flooding issues, but it is still not clear what this will mean in practice. The recent public meeting for affordable homes development proposals off Bridgnorth Road / Callaughton Road was welcome and the commitment from South Shropshire Housing Group to meet or exceed the Neighbourhood Plan policies is a very positive indication that this Housing Group want to get it right.

Proposal: that the Town Council request commitment from Shropshire Council to ensure that the Housing Group development, should it go forward, is integrated into the flood risk reduction proposals for Hunters Gate.

**Water Quality**

One aspect that is often overlooked is the water quality. Like many towns, almost all Much Wenlock’s homes are connected to an old-fashioned combined sewer network. So during rainy weather, whenever the overflow is triggered, a mix of water and effluent is discharged in the river and then down through Farley ending up in the River Severn - all legally permitted. Only Severn Trent Water (STW) knows how often this happens and they are reluctant (understandably) to tell us. Once Shropshire Council finally put the protection ponds in place this will significantly reduce the amount of untreated effluent being discharged through the overflow. However it is not just when it rains that there is a water quality issue. The Environment Agency (EA) has been keeping an eye on the river quality and their data shows that the Shylte river has not been in a healthy state for many years. The main issue is dissolved Phosphate, which the EA have confirmed is over ten times higher than ‘good’ levels – reasons unknown. It is wholly inappropriate that this inadequate water can feed into the aquifer that supplies Much Wenlock’s drinking water.

Proposal

1. That the Town Council requests Shropshire Council, as the formal ‘responsible body’ under the Water Framework Directive, to confirm when STW / EA / Shropshire Council expect the river water quality to achieve a good level.
2. That the Town Council formally request Severn Trent Water to confirm how often the outfall sewer (overflow) has been opened over the last 3 years.”

It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** that the Town Council would:

- i. **Request commitment from Shropshire Council to ensure that the Housing Group development, should it go forward, is integrated into the flood risk reduction proposals.**
- ii. **Request Shropshire Council, as the formal ‘responsible body’ under the Water Framework Directive, to confirm when STW / EA / Shropshire Council expect the river water quality to achieve a good level.**
- iii. **Formally request Severn Trent Water to confirm how often the outfall sewer (overflow) has been opened over the last 3 years.**

**13) PLANNING**

- a) There were no planning applications referred by the Planning & Environment Committee.  
**NOTED.**
- b) The Chairman of the Planning & Environment Committee updated Members about the latest planning applications which had been considered by the Committee.  
**NOTED.**

**14) CONSULTATION**

Members considered how the Town Council should respond to Shropshire Council’s Highways Asset Management Plan.

**It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that the Town Council had already put forward its Road Safety Priorities to Shropshire Council and this should be considered as the Town Council’s response.**

**15) PLACE PLAN REVIEW**

Members considered an invitation from Shropshire Council inviting parish and town clerks to be part of a working group with Shropshire Council officers to redesign and ultimately refocus what a place plan looks like and the value it could bring to communities and the public sector.

**It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that the Town Council would wait to be invited to future workshops.**

**16) SAMDev**

Members received a briefing note from Shropshire Council outlining the outcome of the Inspector's Report of the SAMDev (Site Allocations and Management of Development Plan). The Inspector had found the Plan was sound provided that the changes recommended by the Inspector were incorporated. The Plan was also consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** that the information in the briefing note be **NOTED**.

**17) ARCHIVIST REPORTS**

- a) Members received a written report from the Archivist of the Wenlock Olympian Society. It outlined how the AQA exam board draft suggests that knowledge of pre-industrial sport could be gained through an understanding of the role of the Wenlock Olympian Society. The Society continues its link with the University of Wolverhampton and the William Penny Brookes Centre of Sports Medicine and Active Learning at Shrewsbury University. The report also informed of presentations, contacts and events the Society had made during the year and what additions had been made to the Archive.

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

- b) Members received a written report from the Town's Volunteer Archivists which had been considered by the Finance & Resources Committee, along with a copy of the Committee's decision concerning recommendations set out in the report. The Committee had agreed that:

- Members of the public should be invited to an illustrated briefing on the nature and importance of the town archives and the event should be widely publicised.
- The Town Council would celebrate in 2018 the 550<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the granting of a Charter to the Borough of Wenlock and the Town Council should consider it further at the January 2016 Town Council meeting. Neighbouring parishes should also be included in the discussions.
- The Archivists should be asked to make a presentation to neighbouring parishes that were previously part of the Borough of Wenlock to raise awareness of the need to conserve the first Minute Book.
- £1,250 should be earmarked towards the cost of conservation, and Professor Mary Beard should be invited to be Patron of fund raising alongside the Mayor of Much Wenlock.
- The Town Council, collectively with the Archivists, would seek further grant funding.

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

- i. **The information be NOTED.**
- ii. **This would be discussed further at the next Town Council meeting.**
- iii. **That the Archivists should be asked for further details concerning the condition of the Minute Book and the work that is necessary to conserve it.**

**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) YOUTH CLUB BUILDING AND ASSOCIATED LAND TRANSFER**

Members received pertinent information in order to assist in reaching a final decision concerning Shropshire Council's offer of the youth club building and associated land transfer which included:

- A written timeline showing all meetings of the Town Council when the offer had been considered and the Council's decision.
- Copies of Shropshire Council's offer in detail including the Heads of Terms drawn up by Shropshire Council's solicitor.
- A copy of the Town Clerk's letter to Shropshire Council requesting that the Joint Use Agreement be terminated.
- A copy email from Shropshire Council with a timeline of communication between the two councils.
- A copy of the Town Council's solicitor's advice.
- Business Plan adopted by the Town Council on 3 July 2014.

The Town Clerk informed members that she had received a further email from Steve Brown at Shropshire Council stating that if the Town Council did not make a decision this evening he would "...recommend to Shropshire Council that it withdraws its proposal, places the facility on the open market for sale / disposal, and informs Children's Services to de-commit its planned investment".

The Town Clerk also informed Members of the Town Council’s solicitor’s recent correspondence which stated “As we discussed on site the decision is do we proceed with the purchase and take on the liability for the access to the school and the grassed area or do we withdraw and lose the building? It comes down to what the building is worth to the Town Council and if it’s worth more than the risk involved with having the access way to the school”.

Members expressed concern that the projected income included in the Business Plan would be significantly reduced because those who had expressed an interest in hiring the youth club building had either found other premises or found that the building would not be suitable for their needs.

Several suggestions were put forward including asking Shropshire Council to reduce the period of 12 year clawback allowing them to receive 50% of the capital if the property was sold, asking Shropshire Council to remove the restriction that the building could only be sold for community use, and that the pathway should be removed from the offer.

The Town Clerk explained that Shropshire Council had already been asked those questions and had refused to budge. The Town Council had to accept the offer in its entirety.

It was PROPOSED that the Town Council should proceed with the acquisition subject to Shropshire Council’s restriction (that the youth building could only be sold for community use) being removed.

It was further PROPOSED and SECONDED that the Town Council should decline Shropshire Council’s offer in its entirety.

The first proposal was SECONDED and after being put to the vote with 4 votes in favour and 5 votes against the PROPOSAL to accept Shropshire Council’s offer without the restriction on community use was LOST.

A recorded vote was requested for voting on the second proposal and after being put to the vote that Shropshire Council’s offer be declined in its entirety, with 5 votes in favour (Cllr. Mary Hill, Cllr. Bert Harper, Cllr. Graham Edgcumbe Venning, Cllr. Dafydd Jenkins, and Cllr. Yvonne Holyoak) and 4 votes against (Cllr. Mike Grace, Cllr. Robin Bennett, Cllr. Joffrey Watson, and Cllr. Milner Whiteman),

**it was RESOLVED that Shropshire Council’s entire offer be declined.**

**20) AGENDA ITEMS FOR NEXT TOWN COUNCIL MEETING**

It was AGREED that Members should inform the Town Clerk of any items they would like included on the next agenda.

**21) DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was NOTED that the next meeting would take place on Thursday 14 January 2016.

The meeting closed at 21:05.

Signed.....

Date.....

Cllr. Yvonne Holyoak  
Town Mayor