

**ANNUAL TOWN MEETING
OF MUCH WENLOCK**
held at the Priory Hall, The Bull Ring
7.30 pm on Thursday 17 March 2016

PRESENT:

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

IN ATTENDANCE:

Sharon Clayton - Town Clerk
Clive Wright – Chief Executive, Shropshire Council
Special Constable Philippa Jackman-Day, Specials Recruitment Officer, Warwickshire Police & West Mercia Police
Paul Sutton, Shropshire Housing Group
Lesley Durbin, Neighbourhood Plan Monitoring Panel
Howard Horsley, Neighbourhood Plan Monitoring Panel

Approximately 30 members of the public

1. WELCOME

The Chairman, Cllr. Yvonne Holyoak, opened the meeting and said she was delighted to see so many people and hoped they would find the meeting useful.

2. MINUTES

The minutes from the Annual Town Meeting held on 12 March 2015 were APPROVED.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED that the minutes be ADOPTED as a true record.

3. MAYOR'S REPORT

Before the Chairman read her report she invited her chaplain, the Rev'd Matthew Stafford, to say a prayer. The Chairman thanked the Reverend for his prayer and then gave the following report of notable things that the Town Council had done over the past year:

- The Town Council was to purchase commemorative mugs from Wenlock Pottery to celebrate the Queen's 90th birthday. The mugs were to be given to primary school children in the parish. The Council was also supporting the Queen's Tea Party being organised by the Wenlock Festival.
- The Town Council was in talks with Shropshire Council about the possibility of the Town Council taking over responsibility for the library, the museum, open spaces, and car parks. There would be a consultation with the local community before any decisions were made.
- The Town Council had approved a precept of £180,307 for 2016/2017, a rise of 1.6%, £153.64 for a Band D dwelling.
- The Town Council was trying to raise funding for the conservation of the first minute book of the Borough of Wenlock which was housed at Shropshire Archives. It contains minutes from 1496 to 1658.

**ANNUAL TOWN MEETING
OF MUCH WENLOCK
held at the Priory Hall, The Bull Ring
7.30 pm on Thursday 17 March 2016**

- Broseley, Barrow and Much Wenlock councils had made a joint bid to Shropshire Council to help prevent HGVs driving through town centres.
- Much Wenlock, Bridgnorth, and Broseley Town Councils were having discussions with a view to working collaboratively to maintain highways.
- The Town Council receives regular reports from the local policing team. The team have been given laser gun training. The recently installed CCTV had proved useful to the police. There would be a recruitment drive for Special Constables at one of the Food Fairs in April.
- The Local Joint Committee continues to meet regularly although, due to lack of funding, had become an enabler.
- The construction of two attenuation ponds near Stretton Road and Sytche Lane was due to begin in October.
- The Neighbourhood Development Plan for Much Wenlock was being closely followed by the Town Council's Planning & Environment Committee, and the Town Council's Action Plan was also being monitored for progress by the Council.
- The Gaskell Recreation Ground Management Committee was dealing with major drainage problems on the ground but was keen to keep it as a public facility to be enjoyed by the local community.
- The Town Council had sponsored the newly updated 'Olympian Trail' leaflet.
- The 'Friends of the Cemetery' continue to explore ways of raising funds to bring the cemetery back into use as a community facility. By keeping the grounds in good order they have created a peaceful environment.

The Chairman explained that this was not a full list of activities; only a brief outline of the many addressed by the Town Council.

4. POLICE UPDATE

Special Constable Philippa Jackman-Day, Specials Recruitment Officer, Warwickshire Police & West Mercia Police, was in attendance to inform people about plans to recruit Special Constables.

She said she had two roles within West Mercia Police; one as a Special Constable and one as sergeant to which she had recently been appointed. She policed Church Stretton and Ludlow and was the Recruitment Officer for this area. She said that the regular police were very busy and Special Constables were very much needed. Although Specials are volunteers they are trained officers who carry out the same work and have the same powers as regular police. CSOs do not have the same powers. Specials are warranted and a new recruitment scheme was underway to recruit more. The police need to significantly increase their numbers. Volunteers should be over 18 but no particular qualifications are needed. They work a minimum of 16 hours per week and bring skills from outside of the police force. The police would like some Specials to police Much Wenlock and Broseley. A recruitment drive had been undertaken through local media including Twitter and Facebook. After 3 years Specials automatically qualify to apply for a paid post.

The Chairman thanked Philippa for attending the meeting after which she left.

5. SHROPSHIRE HOUSING GROUP

Paul Sutton from the Shropshire Housing Group was in attendance to inform members of the public about how they were working with partners to deliver affordable homes. There were presently 54 households waiting for affordable housing, some were already living within Much Wenlock and waiting for homes in the parish. One of the challenges faced in the Neighbourhood Plan is managed affordable housing, focusing on small scale exceptions and other sites. This policy is based on a collaborative partnership and local decision making.

**ANNUAL TOWN MEETING
OF MUCH WENLOCK
held at the Priory Hall, The Bull Ring
7.30 pm on Thursday 17 March 2016**

Marches CLT Services had been established to deliver affordable housing. It has a Project Board which includes local community members. The Board looked for development sites and the Calloughton Lane site was the preferred exception site. The design is for sustainable homes and the Board was trying to address issues including drainage and highways. Two public consultation events had been held at which the design ambition had been revealed. The plan for the site provides for 12 dwellings to be designed around the type of people who need them. Exception sites are, under current legislation, precluded from Right to Buy Schemes. The plans for this site were already in the public domain and it was expected that the final plans would be available in May 2016, the planning application to be submitted in June 2016, with a consultation period during the summer. The Project Board would endeavour to ensure that the homes only go to people with a strong local connection.

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

6. IMPACT OF DEVOLVED SERVICES IN MUCH WENLOCK

Clive Wright, Chief Executive of Shropshire Council was in attendance to discuss the impact of government funding cuts within the locality. Shropshire Council was having a 'Big Conversation' which engaged partners, including town and parish councils. The purpose of the 'Big Conversation' was to allow people to inform Shropshire Council through consultation what they would like Shropshire Council to do. Engagement precedes consultation so Shropshire Council was engaging first and then consulting afterwards when it was clearer what local people wanted. There are certain functions that Shropshire Council has to do, such as the provision of adult social care, safeguarding children, and refuse collection. These services would be retained although Shropshire Council would strive to make efficiency savings. About £140m had already been saved but further cuts needed to be made. Shropshire Council was the cheapest in England and provided the highest quality of service. The population in Shropshire has about twice the amount of elderly people elsewhere which significantly impacts on the Council's budget. Most businesses in Shropshire are small and do not therefore have to pay business rates. This reduces the Council's income stream and many of the services which used to be available need to be cut back or completely cut out. Feedback from engagement puts education first, safeguarding children second followed by adult social care. Unless there is a ring fenced grant, such as for highways maintenance, the services would be reduced. Shropshire Council had been talking to parish and town councils to discuss how they could work together as equal partners to solve problems together. Where Shropshire Council would not be able to afford to spend in certain areas local councils would need to decide how those services could be delivered. Shropshire Council was looking for a statistically sound consultation result through online surveys although face-to-face surveys would be carried out as well. Those who were not the 'usual suspects' had also been approached for their views. Shropshire Council had been informed overwhelmingly to raise council tax and had subsequently asked people how it should be spent. Shropshire Council would spend its funds based around its priorities.

The Mayor informed Members of the public that the Town Council had only had one meeting to date with Shropshire Council around devolved services in Much Wenlock.

Concern was expressed that with so much responsibility being passed to parish councils, people would be put off from putting themselves forward to be parish councillors who are volunteers. Mr Wright said Shropshire Council agreed that it was cutting back more than it would like to but it does not have the money to provide some services and was trying to minimise any negative impact. It was acknowledged that keeping the elderly in their own homes and living independently is cheaper

**ANNUAL TOWN MEETING
OF MUCH WENLOCK
held at the Priory Hall, The Bull Ring
7.30 pm on Thursday 17 March 2016**

than putting them into care, and there were new voluntary groups coming together to look after them and more needed to be done to fill the gaps being left. Further savings could be made if people befriended the lonely. It is difficult to encourage volunteers when they have legal responsibilities such as required by those looking after young people. More than 70% of people polled thought there should be more volunteering. Shropshire Council was working with other local authorities to lobby government to understand the consequences of government cuts and ministers had been invited to visit the area.

Concern was expressed about the future of Much Wenlock library and one member of the public said she would prefer it to have trained staff rather than volunteers because the standard of service would not be the same. Mr Wright said that Shropshire Council could not afford to maintain libraries in the same way and libraries had not been polled has a high priority. Shropshire Council takes care of 155 things that people may not be aware of such as registering births and deaths and road maintenance. Shropshire Council was now more efficient in its service delivery and did not think there would be a referendum any time soon concerning the council tax. Shropshire Council had been working with all of the schools across Shropshire and, although numbers in primary schools were dwindling, the government's recent statement that all primary schools should become academies would have a minor impact on Shropshire Council. It is not prescribed how statutory duties should be carried out and various local authorities use different methods. Information portals were under development and there would be further integration of services and sharing of buildings. Although there were over 300,000 people in Shropshire only around 2,000 people had responded to the consultation and one member of the public expressed concern about this since Shropshire Council was using this data to set its budget. Mr Wright said some parish and town councils had shown an interest in taking on some services and Shropshire Council was offering expertise to assist with the devolution of services.

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

7. NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR MUCH WENLOCK

On behalf the Neighbourhood Plan Monitoring Panel, Lesley Durbin, a community representative on the Panel, gave an update on their work to date. She said the Plan was due for review in 2017. Now that the Plan was local policy for Much Wenlock Shropshire Council planning officers were referring to it when making planning decisions for the parish. To date 27 dwellings had been completed in the town and another 9 proposed, which indicated that the town was on target to deliver the required number of dwellings by the first review date. As well as monitoring housing delivery the Panel would review other policies within the Plan and formal indicators had been established.

Howard Horsley, another community representative on the Panel, explained that although government may change legislation the Plan was being referred to by Shropshire Council as local policy. The Town Council was also referring to the Plan when commenting on planning applications. Mr Horsley urged members of the public to refer to the Plan too when commenting on planning applications.

The Chairman thanked both of them for the update.

8. GASKELL RECREATION GROUND

Cllr. Mary Hill explained that the Gaskell Recreation Ground was being managed through the charity which had established a Management Committee of six members, three town councillors and three representatives of Wenlock Estates. There were significant problems with drainage on

**ANNUAL TOWN MEETING
OF MUCH WENLOCK
held at the Priory Hall, The Bull Ring
7.30 pm on Thursday 17 March 2016**

the ground and Cllr. Bert Harper explained the background of how these problems had arisen. He said that the deep tank in the children's playground was causing problems and the Committee was trying to determine ownership. The tank was currently registered to the Corporation. The Committee was developing a Management Plan which would be informed by the results from a consultation event held on 30 January 2016.

Concern was expressed about who was legally responsible for the ground. The Town Clerk explained that the Town Council was the custodian trustee of the ground and could appoint other trustees if it so wished. Although the charity was responsible for the ground it had appointed a Management Committee which was responsible for the day-to-day management.

One member of the public informed the meeting that there was s106 funding allocated to the Gaskell Recreation Ground which was time limited.

9. OPEN FORUM

The Chairman apologised that the meeting had gone on for longer than envisaged due to the number of speakers. She thanked everyone for attending and drew the meeting to a close at 21:26.

Signed: Date:
Chairman