

MUCH WENLOCK TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
held at The Guildhall, Much Wenlock
7 pm on Thursday 4 October 2018

Present:

Cllr. Graham Edgcumbe Venning (Chairman), Cllr. Herbert Harper, Cllr. Mary Hill, Cllr. Yvonne Holyoak, Cllr. Dafydd Jenkins, Cllr. Kate Southan, Cllr. Marcus Themans, Cllr. Daniel Thomas, Cllr. Allan Walter and Cllr. Milner Whiteman OBE.

Town Clerk:

Sharon Clayton

In attendance:

Approximately 27 members of the public

1) Chairman's welcome

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and gave the following statement:

"I welcome members of the community for your attendance and showing your interest in how the Town Council are trying to enhance Much Wenlock as a place to live and enjoy as well as enhancing the town as a place to visit. May I particularly welcome the attendance of former Mayors and Councillors. I'm focusing this welcome upon you, former members, with a particular purpose. You are all well aware that all members of the Town Council act as volunteers, without pay or benefit. As such we have no hidden agendas or goals apart from wanting to make a social contribution to the well-being of the town. Could I please seek your cooperation in making this clear to other members of the community when in conversation or deliberation with them. We don't expect special thanks but would welcome positive contribution. I repeat what I said six months ago – it is easier to point a finger than lend a hand. In welcoming you to tonight's meeting I would ask you to think back to item 20 on last month's agenda – 'Recent business closures and future opportunities'. This was a free ranging discussion with no motions tabled and therefore no proposals or voting. I took the view that it was not needed for me to declare any pecuniary interest, having already declared my interest on the formal register of interest, or leave the room during discussions. However, it has come to my attention through social media and local hearsay, that this action, rather the lack of it, concerned or upset some residents. Integrity, responsibility and accountability are all key factors in holding local office, all of which I hold dear to my heart. I apologise if my actions during this session caused concern."

He thanked all councillors and welcomed their significant contributions to the planning and execution of projects including the Charter Day celebrations, the Battle's Over commemoration, enhancement of the Gaskell Recreation Ground, tourism and social media, property improvement, and the re-location of artworks. The Mayor looked forward to attending the Wellington Festival on 21 October and welcoming the town's twins from Cysoing on 26 October 2018.

He further added that he was disappointed to witness the removal of the ATM at the Barclays Bank premises after he had been assured by Barclays that the ATM would remain. He had contacted Barclays and been informed that alterations were necessary to isolate the ATM and it would therefore be no ATM facility until the necessary work had been carried out.

2) Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr. Adam Davy who had a family engagement.

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.

The Mayor declared an interest in agenda item 20 since he was a director of a business in the High Street.

4) Dispensations

None requested.

5) Shropshire Council Report

Cllr. David Turner gave the following verbal report.

- The community were pulling together to put on a beacon as part of Battle's Over and Shropshire Council was assisting with those endeavours by ensuring that the multi-use games area would be open and flood lighting available on Sunday 11 November 2018, free of charge.
- His next advice surgery would take place on 20 October 2018 at Much Wenlock museum.

NOTED.

6) Public Session

The Mayor had received requests to speak from two members of the public and he invited each of them to speak in turn.

- a) One member of the public informed the meeting that the new affordable homes at Callaughton Ash were fully occupied with people having a strong local connection. However, there were still 17 applicants remaining who qualify and also have a strong local connection. This demonstrates that there is still a great demand for affordable properties for local people in Much Wenlock and she asked if the Council has yet made a formal approach to any housing associations to bring forward more affordable housing.

The Chairman informed that this would be considered later in the meeting.

- b) One member of the public had two questions. The first referred to agenda item 26, Barclays Bank, when at a Town Council meeting held on 5 July 2018 it was agreed that Barclays Bank should be offered a maximum sum of £165,000 to purchase its premises in Much Wenlock High Street. At a Council meeting on 6 September 2018 the Council agreed to increase that offer and the Council was asked, if the Council had agreed to increase that offer, should the Council first have rescinded the decision made on 5 July in accordance with Standing Orders.

The second question asked the Council to consider holding a public meeting at which the Town Council should inform of its plans concerning the purchase of Barclays Bank premises.

The Chairman explained that Barclays Bank would be discussed later in the meeting and that, as negotiations were still live, it would be inappropriate to disclose all matters relating to negotiations.

7) Minutes

- a) The minutes of a Town Council meeting held on 6 September 2018 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 Planning & Environment Committee meeting held on 5 June and 31 July 2018 were **NOTED and ADOPTED.**
- c) The minutes of a Finance & Asset Management Committee meeting held on 24 July 2018 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 was asked whether there were any plans to improve the Pound and the Town Clerk advised that if the Council decided to enhance this area any costs would need to be budgeted for. The Chairman advised that the Council already had begun projects on the Guildhall and the Corn Exchange and it would not be prudent to take on yet another project although the Pound would not be forgotten.

The Town Clerk also gave the following verbal update:

- During works to lay new electricity cables at the top of the High Street earlier in the year, Western Power's contractor, Morgan Sindall had accidentally knocked down a cast iron lamp which turned out to be unrepairable. The Town Clerk had requested some compensation from Western Power and had finally received a cheque for £500. This money would be put towards the newly installed floral displays at the top of the High Street.
- Cllr. Yvonne Holyoak and Cllr. Milner Whiteman had attended a meeting with Shropshire Housing at which they were informed that the Town Council was to receive £3,000 for each affordable dwelling at Callaughton Ash. Shropshire Council had set up a Community Fund because it recognised that small affordable housing schemes did not attract CIL monies. The Town Clerk informed Members that she had signed the necessary forms to receive a total sum of £36,000 which would be paid to the Town Council and ring-fenced until the Council agreed how it should be spent.

- The Town Clerk explained that new requests for road safety schemes put forward to Shropshire Council for inclusion in its Road Safety Policy were being deferred although Shropshire Council would still maintain its statutory responsibilities with regards to road safety.

NOTED

9) Affordable Housing

Members received a verbal update from Cllr. Yvonne Holyoak following her attendance at a meeting on 3 October 2018 with the Development Manager of Connexus. Cllr. Milner Whiteman also attended the meeting. Both were informed that the Town Council was eligible to receive £36,000 from Shropshire Council's Community Fund, £3,000 for each affordable dwelling at Callaughton Ash. The Town Clerk had signed the necessary paperwork and Shropshire Council would transfer the money to Connexus who would pass it on to the Town Council. Cllrs. Holyoak and Whiteman were asked whether the community and the Town Council wished to have more starter homes to which they answered 'yes' because there is a waiting list of 15 priority families in great need. They were advised that another piece of land was available next to Callaughton Ash and the Town Council should be vigilant in searching for building land and Connexus was anxious to build in Much Wenlock again. A new Project Group was to be formed to include community members and the Town Clerk would be advised of the details.

Members also considered a written report from a member of the public asking the Town Council if it had yet made a formal approach to any Housing Associations to bring forward more quality affordable housing for local people in Much Wenlock. The Chairman informed that the Council was not standing still.

It was recommended that the Council needs a good breakdown of the churn rate to prove whether the Callaughton Ash project was successful including indicators of why it is successful and information about where the people come from. This information also needs to be compared with land put forward as part of Shropshire Council's "Call for Sites".

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

- The Council's representatives on the Connexus Project Board should ask them for a report showing the churn rate of people occupying affordable homes to prove the success of the Callaughton Ash project.
- The Town Council would approach housing associations concerning the delivery of affordable homes.

10) External Audit

Members received notification of the conclusion of the external audit from the external auditor, PFK Littlejohn LLP.

It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED AND RESOLVED** that the external auditor's comments be **NOTED**.

11) Battle's Over Commemorative Events

Members considered for approval proposals and costings for events proposed by the WW1 Commemoration Working Group. These included books recommended by the Department for Culture Media & Sport being donated to Much Wenlock Primary School and William Brookes School libraries, commemorative coins from the Royal Mint for competition prize winners at the primary school, music CDs and DVDs with WW1 music and songs to be played at the Corn Market on Saturday 10 November 2018, and to light up Holy Trinity Church with a silhouette poppy or soldier as a focal point for the town. There were also plans to have yarn poppies made by the local care homes to support the poppy appeal and there would be a poppy wreath laid at Much Wenlock cemetery on Friday 9 November 2018 attended by a few primary school children. The total cost for approval was £679.17.

It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** that a sum of **£800** be **APPROVED**.

12) Name for Committee Room at the Corn Exchange

Members of the community had been invited, via the Wenlock Herald, to suggest names for the committee room at the Corn Exchange and someone had suggested 'Gone to Earth' which is the title of Mary Webb's second novel.

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

- The meeting room should be called the "Mary Webb" room.
- Contained within the room should be a reference as why the room was so named.
- The Mary Webb Society should be notified of the Council's decision.

13) Shropshire's Mayflower Children

Members considered for approval granting permission for the erection of a memorial near the front of Much Wenlock Museum to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the banishment on the Mayflower of the four More children from Shipton.

It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED** that permission be granted in principle for the proposal.

14) Tourism

Members considered an email from a member of the public who had made suggestions and put forward ideas to support tourism in Much Wenlock in response to a discussion about tourism at the last Town Council meeting.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED that the Media, Marketing and Tourism Working Group should respond.

15) Museum Review

Members **NOTED** that the museums of Shropshire Council were all being structurally reviewed, including the Friends organisations of the various museum. However, the Friends of Much Wenlock had decided to hold their activities until the review had been published.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED that the Friends of Much Wenlock should be asked to confirm whether they were continuing with their activities.

16) Road Traffic Issues

Members considered how the Council could deal with recent traffic issues following problems with traffic at the top of the High Street following improvement works. Now that the entrance to the High Street had been narrowed it had resulted in parked vehicles causing an obstruction. The Chairman informed the meeting that further meetings concerning further road improvements were planned between the Town Council and Shropshire Council's contractors and this issue would be discussed then. It was suggested that Shropshire Council could be asked to patrol the town more frequently and, if necessary, the Town Council could help fund extra patrols.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED that Shropshire Council should be asked if extra patrols could be carried out in Much Wenlock and at what cost.

17) Feedback from Ironbridge Power Station

Members received feedback from Cllr. Mary Hill who had attended a stakeholder day with Harworth concerning development plans for Ironbridge Power Station. She informed the meeting that there were a number of stakeholders in attendance representing various skills. Attendees were divided into groups and each group asked what they would like to see. This led to a lot of high-quality discussion. Stakeholders were given a tour around the site and during the afternoon all their suggested ideas were collated.

Harworth is based in Yorkshire and has been tasked with clearing the site and directing activities and this is the second site that Harworth have managed. They don't appear to have any pre-conceived ideas and their main aim is to gather ideas from people who live and work in the area. They have submitted a planning application to re-locate Great Crested newts after which the site can be cleared which will take about three years. Development proposals include a mix of housing, industrial and green space. Another site entrance would be needed but it was not sure where the most suitable place would be. If viable the railway line would be kept open. There would be another public meeting on 11 October to which members of the public were invited. Cllr. Hill also encouraged people to write to the Town Clerk with ideas which she would pass on to Harworth.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED to NOTE.

18) Live Streaming of Town Council Meetings

Members considered whether Town Council meetings should be live streamed. Cllr. Kate Southan informed the meeting that after being approached by a member of the public she thought it would be a good idea, especially for people with access issues to the Guildhall. She didn't think it would involve much cost and that the easiest option might be to stream through the Council's Facebook page. Concern was expressed about buffering, licencing and archive issues and that microphones would be needed.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED that Cllr. Kate Southan, Cllr. Daniel Thomas, and Cllr. Marcus Themans should form a working group to develop a project for live streaming of Council meetings for consideration at the next Town Council meeting.

19) Communication Policy

Members were asked to consider for approval an updated Communications Policy.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED that this be deferred to the next Town Council meeting.

The Chairman introduced the next item, declared a pecuniary interest and left the room during the discussion and voting and the Deputy Chairman, Cllr. Herbert Harper, chaired the meeting in the absence of the Chairman.

20) Sponsorship of Floral Displays in the Town

Members considered for approval whether local businesses should be invited to sponsor floral displays at Sheinton Street and High Street. Sponsors would have a plaque affixed to each planter in recognition of their sponsorship.

It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and unanimously AGREED** that local businesses should be invited to sponsor the floral planters at Sheinton Street and the High Street.

The Chairman returned to the room and continued to chair the meeting.

21) Drainage of the Gaskell Recreation Ground

Members considered for approval a specification for drainage on the Gaskell Recreation Ground so that it could be advertised on Contract Finder in accordance with the Council’s Standing Orders and Financial Regulations. Members were advised that Shropshire Council had offered to allow the contractors to use the land adjacent to the former youth club building in Station Road provided the Town Council paid for the preparation of a licence agreement for use of the ground.

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

- a) **The specification be advertised on Contract Finder for a period of 28 days.**
- b) **Shropshire Council should be asked to draw up a licence agreement within a budget of up to £500.**

22) Consultation

None received.

23) Correspondence

The following correspondence was received and **NOTED**:

- a) SALC information bulletin and other information sent to Members via email.
- b) Letter from Shropshire Council concerning speed and volume of traffic on the A458 through Much Wenlock.

24) Agenda items for the next town council meeting

To be advised.

25) Date of next meeting

It was **NOTED** that the next meeting would take place on Thursday 1 November 2018.

Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960

Pursuant to Section 1(2) of the above Act it was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** that, due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, the public and press should not be present.

26) Barclays Bank

Following concern expressed by one member of the public earlier in the meeting the Town Clerk advised that the decision made on 7 July 2018 to offer Barclays a maximum sum of £165,000 to secure ownership of the premises be rescinded along with the decision made on 6 September 2018.

After being put to the vote; it was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and unanimously RESOLVED** that the decisions made on 7 July and 6 September 2018 be rescinded so that the offer to Barclays could be increased.

The Chairman informed Members of his dialogue with Barclays Bank.

NOTED.

Members also considered a request made by a member of the public earlier in the meeting that public meetings should be held to keep them informed about negotiations concerning the purchase of Barclays premises.

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

- a) **Discussions with Barclays were too sensitive to be conveyed to the public at this stage and confidential discussions would continue until Barclays had accepted an offer.**
- b) **The Working Group have delegated authority to negotiate a purchase price with Barclays as outlined in the confidential report appended with these minutes.**

27) Verbal Report from Town Clerk

Members received a verbal update from the Town Clerk concerning staffing matters.

NOTED.

The meeting closed at 21:00.

Signed.....
Town Mayor

Date.....