

MUCH WENLOCK TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
held at The Guildhall, Much Wenlock
7 pm on Thursday, 5th December 2019

Present: Cllr. Herbert Harper (in the Chair), Cllr. Mary Hill, Cllr. Yvonne Holyoak, Cllr. Natalie Park, Cllr. Matthew Park, Cllr. Marcus Themans, Cllr. Daniel Thomas (from minute 18), Allan Walter, Cllr. Duncan White, Cllr. Milner Whiteman OBE.

Town Clerk: Trudi Barrett

In attendance: Shropshire Councillor David Turner and 4 members of the public

1) Chairman's Welcome

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting, particularly the three new Councillors.

The Mayor reported recent events attended:

- 8th November: An Act of Remembrance with primary school pupils and the Head Teacher at the Cemetery
The JL Edwards awards presentation evening at William Brookes Academy
- 10th November: Remembrance services at Holy Trinity Church, Bourton and Holy Trinity Church, Much Wenlock
- 11th November: Act of Remembrance at the Corn Exchange
- 13th November: Rural Strategy Workshop at Shirehall, Shrewsbury, with Councillor Hill and the Town Clerk
- 20th November: Sustainability Forum at Shirehall, Shrewsbury, with Councillor Hill and the Town Clerk
- 24th November: Performance of Legally Blonde the Musical, by Shropshire Musical Theatre and 7 Academy of Performing Arts at the Edge Arts Centre
- 26th November: Meeting with Prof Mark Barrow, Shropshire Council Director of Place, with Councillor Daniel Thomas, Deputy Mayor, and the Town Clerk
- 28th November: Climate change event at Craven Arms with Councillor Hill
- 29th November: Samaranch Tree planting ceremony on the Gaskell Recreation Ground, following by a reception in the Guildhall organised by Wenlock Olympians.

2) Apologies for absence

Cllr. Dafydd Jenkins – work

Cllr. Daniel Thomas for lateness – other council business.

These apologies were accepted 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. **None.**

4) Dispensations

None requested.

5) Shropshire Council Report

Shropshire Councillor, David Turner, gave a verbal report:

He congratulated the new councillors on joining the Town Council.

Councillor Turner reported that for years he had been making representations to Shropshire Council with regard to the poor condition of the drains in the town and had now received undertakings that these would be addressed. The gully tanker had

been visiting the town and had cleared drains in the easier locations, with others scheduled to be addressed on 8th December. Councillor Turner encouraged those who would normally park their vehicles in areas where the drains had not been cleared to park elsewhere following the Christmas Fayre and for the following day.

Councillor Turner's next advice surgery would be held on 14th December at the Museum.

He wished all a merry Christmas and happy new year.

6) Public Session

Arthur Hill, Chairman of the new Flood Group, spoke on flooding, in relation to climate change. He noted that extremes of weather such as heavy rain would particularly affect Much Wenlock, due to the bowl-shaped topography of the town. He noted that following the presentation by the Environment Agency in July, four people, who all had personal experience of flooding, had formed a new flood group and started work. Their initial focus was on resolving the existing problems in the town. The attenuation ponds were working well but some drains in the town had not been cleaned for five years and tree roots had grown through some of the pipes. Positive meetings had been held with the new Shropshire Council flooding officer, John Bellis, as well as other interested parties. Drain clearance was now being addressed although resolution of some of the problems, such as broken drains, would be longer term.

Mr Hill mentioned other issues to be addressed, including the following:

- cleaning the culvert under the railway embankment near the Gaskell Ground, which contained a high voltage electrical cable, and protection of a transformer on the Gaskell Ground
- drainage from the housing development at Sytche Lane, which did not appear to be connected
- completion of a road crossing to complete drainage from Hunters Gate across the park
- drainage on the new Callaughtons Ash development, where water was discharging onto the road. Mr Hill urged the Town Council to write to Shropshire Council regarding this matter and was advised that the Town Council had raised concerns prior to construction of the houses.
- the attenuation ponds were working, although the camber of the Stretton Road meant that the water did not go into the pond there as it should.

Mr Hill invited members of the public to contact the new flood group with concerns about any flooding issues. The Mayor thanked Mr Hill and the other volunteers for their valuable work.

7) New Councillors

It was noted that Natalie Park was elected to the Council at the by-election held on 7th November and that Duncan White and Matthew Park were subsequently elected to the remaining vacant positions at an uncontested by-election.

8) Poll Cards for By-Elections

It was noted that the Town Council had not requested poll cards for the by-election held on 7th November, although there had still been a turn-out of 22.13%. In addition to the cost of £2,500 for the by-election, the cost of poll cards would be approximately £1,500 per election in Much Wenlock.

Councillors considered the cost and environmental impact of the production and distribution of poll cards against the need to inform electors of a forthcoming election, particularly those in outlying areas. It was noted that appropriate notices had been displayed prior to the recent election and that there was no obligation to issue poll cards or to present cards at the polling station. The candidates had promoted themselves widely. However, the Town Council could produce more publicity to raise awareness of forthcoming elections.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to have no poll card cards for future Town Council elections.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to commit to having a concerted publicity campaign to raise awareness of future Town Council elections.

9) Publication of Contact Details for Town Councillors

Councillors considered whether the home addresses and telephone numbers of Town Councillors should be publicised by the Town Council or whether the Town Council office address should be provided as an alternative contact address. It was noted that unscrupulous use could be made of Councillors' contact details and the Mayor had personally experienced such problems. It was noted that Telford & Wrekin Council gave the Council office address as the contact address for borough councillors on its website and did not include the home addresses in the registers of interests of those councillors.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to publish the Council office address as the contact address for all Town Councillors. Specific Town Council email addresses should also be set up for Councillors to ensure separation of personal and council business. Personal telephone numbers should continue to be published for Town Councillors.

The Clerk was asked to contact the Monitoring Officer at Shropshire Council to establish the position with regard to the display of the home addresses of Town Councillors on the Shropshire Council website.

10) Use of Social Media

- a. Councillors noted the Council's Communications and Media Policy, particularly with regard to the use of social media.
- b. It was noted that recent information had been received from SALC on the use of social media and the policy would be reviewed to take account of any changes required.

11) Minutes

- a. The minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 7th November 2019 were considered for approval. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 7th November 2019 be APPROVED and ADOPTED as a true record.**
- b. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that the minutes of the Planning & Environment meeting held on 1st October 2019 be ADOPTED as a true record.**
- c. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that the minutes of Finance, Asset Management and Personnel Committee meeting held on 22nd October 2019 be ADOPTED as a true record.**

12) 2020/21 Budget

Members considered the draft 2020/21 budget, recommended by the Finance, Asset Management and HR Committee. An increase in the precept of 4.9953% was proposed, based on the current tax base, from £194,698 to £204,432. A number of new houses in the parish were expected to increase the tax base.

It was PROPOSED by Councillor Holyoak, SECONDED by Councillor Whiteman and unanimously RESOLVED to approve the budget of £266,392 and the precept of £204,432 for the financial year 2020/21.

13) Town Clerk's Report

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

It was noted that further discussions had been held with Barclays Bank regarding the change of mandate and it was hoped that the problems could now be resolved. Once the mandate change had been completed it would be possible to close the charity accounts.

It was noted that, in response to the Town Council's enquiry about a Community Governance Review, the Shropshire Council solicitor had advised that it was planned to submit a report to Council in February outlining proposals to commence a review of town/parish councils in Shropshire, which would include the Much Wenlock area.

NOTED

14) Working Group Reports

Councillors considered reports from the following working groups:

- a. **Friends of the Cemetery**
It was noted that the Act of Remembrance held at the cemetery with the local primary school children had gone very well.
- b. **History**
A meeting was being arranged with the volunteer archivist to discuss storage requirements for items in the archives.
- c. **Communications, Markets & Tourism**
The group had been in discussion with a company which organised markets in various locations around the country, with a view to setting up regular events in Much Wenlock. However, it was reported that the company was no longer interested in pursuing discussions due to the imposition of charges for market stall holders by Shropshire Council. Councillor Themans felt strongly that the current Shropshire Council requirements were not acceptable and that they presented real problems for local events such as the Christmas Fayre, which were run by volunteers and involved stalls from local groups.

It was noted that concerns about the market charges had been raised with Prof Mark Barrow during his recent visit. He had undertaken to pursue the matter, which was also a concern for other towns in the county.

Shropshire Councillor Turner was also asked to convey the Town Council's concerns to Shropshire Council.

d. **Housing Needs**

Councillor Holyoak reported that Connexus had some land in mind and had funding for a further affordable housing development. Connexus was hoping to form a project group in the very near future and it appeared that they would be moving forward with a new development.

During his recent visit, Prof Mark Barrow had been made aware of the Town Council's interest in pursuing discussions with Shropshire Council's new housing company, Cornovii Developments Limited and contact was awaited from the appropriate Shropshire Council Officer.

e. **Barclays Bank**

No progress had been made with 10 High Street, the former Barclays Bank premises, as the problem of access at the front of the building still had to be resolved. This was being addressed by Barclays.

15) Membership of Communications, Markets & Tourism Working Group

Councillors noted that there were currently only two members of the above working group following Councillor resignations.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to appoint Councillors Natalie Park and Duncan White to the Communications, Markets & Tourism Working Group.

16) Telephone Box in Homer

- a. Members noted that the Town Council had responded to the consultation on the future of the public telephone in Homer stating no objection to its removal.
- b. Members noted the decision of the Planning & Environment Committee to purchase the telephone kiosk at a cost of £1, should the telephone be removed. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to ratify the decision to purchase the telephone kiosk in Homer and to advise Shropshire Council accordingly.**
- c. Members noted that the future use of the kiosk would be considered in due course.

17) Gaskell Recreation Ground Drainage

- a. Members noted that the drainage consultant and contractor had identified the need for an additional drain to be installed towards the top of the Gaskell field.
- b. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to approve the installation of the additional drain at a cost of £2,800 + VAT.** It was noted that this would result in an overspend of £277.30 of the contingency budget.

Councillor Thomas joined the meeting.

18) Climate Change

It was noted that the Mayor, Councillor Hill and the Clerk had recently attended a number of presentations and meetings on the topic of climate change. However, it was difficult to know how to start to address the issues. The estimated cost of a carbon audit for the Town Council would be between £500 and £1,000. It was noted that an evening event to raise awareness of climate change was being planned in the town for early February next year.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to leave the matter in abeyance until the new year.

19) Correspondence

Members **NOTED** the following, which had been emailed to Members:

- a. SALC information bulletins and other information.
- b. Editions of The Rural Bulletin.
- c. Ironbridge Power Station Redevelopment newsletter 4 November 2019. It was noted that the cooling towers were scheduled for demolition on 6th December 2019, weather permitting.

20) Christmas Break

Members noted that the Council office would be closed for the Christmas break between 24th and 29th December, open on 30th December and then closed from 31st December to 3rd January, reopening on 6th January 2020.

21) Meeting venue for Annual Town Council meeting

- a. Members noted that the Priory Hall would be unavailable for the reception following the Annual Town Council meeting on Thursday, 7th May 2020 due to use of the venue as a polling station for the West Mercia PCC Election.
- b. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to hold the Mayor's reception on 7th May 2020 in the Guildhall.**

22) Agenda items for next Town Council meeting

Members were invited to suggest items for inclusion on the agenda for the next meeting.

23) Date of next meeting

Members **NOTED** that the next meeting would take place on Thursday, **9th January 2020** at 7.00pm in The Guildhall.

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.

24) Much Wenlock Festival of the Spoken Word – “Get a Word in Edgeways”

Members considered a rental rate for the use of the Mary Webb room between 16th and 20th July 2020 for the above event. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to set the rate for hire of the room between 16th and 20th July 2020 at £100.**

25) Gaskell Recreation Ground Fencing

Members considered quotations for fencing for the new access from William Brookes School through to the Gaskell Recreation Ground, which formed part of the LEADER project. It was noted that there were a number of operational issues to be resolved, relating to timers and locks on the gates.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to place the order for new fencing and gates to create a new accessway from William Brookes School into the Gaskell Recreation Ground with The Great Outdoor Gym Company at a cost of £16,180 + VAT.

The meeting closed at 8.55pm

Signed.....
Town Mayor

Date.....