

MUCH WENLOCK TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
held remotely by video conference
at 7 pm on Thursday, 4th June 2020

Present: Cllr. Mary Hill, Cllr. Yvonne Holyoak, Cllr. Dafydd Jenkins, Cllr. Matthew Park, Cllr. Natalie Park, Cllr. Marcus Themans, Cllr. Daniel Thomas (in the chair), Cllr. Allan Walter, Cllr. Duncan White, Cllr. Milner Whiteman OBE.

Town Clerk: Trudi Barrett

In attendance: Rev'd Matthew Stafford, Shropshire Councillor David Turner, Police Inspector Nicola Roberts and 18 members of the public

1. Chairman's welcome

The Mayor welcomed everybody to the meeting and thanked those who had sent him messages of goodwill on his election as Mayor.

He had been disappointed that the events planned for VE Day had not been able to go ahead, but he had been pleased to see the splendid decorations displayed by residents and traders, who had celebrated the occasion as far as possible. The Mayor had joined local fire fighters at the Fire Station to mark the silence and had also been involved in the VE Day church service. He expressed thanks for both.

The Mayor praised the work of Much Wenlock Mutual Aid and thanked the many volunteers who had come forward to help. He had personally enjoyed being involved and supporting the community in this way.

The Mayor had responded to concerns raised about Shadwell Quarry and had held informal discussions with residents.

2. Apologies

An apology was received from Cllr. Herbert Harper, who had been unable to join the meeting.

This apology was ACCEPTED and AGREED 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.

Cllrs Natalie and Matthew Park declared a pecuniary interest in agenda item 9 (minute 10), Reinvigoration of Much Wenlock Town Centre, as the proprietors of a High Street shop.

4. Dispensations

None requested.

At the Chairman's discretion, item 10 on the agenda, Shadwell Quarry, was brought forward.

5. Shadwell Quarry

In response to local concerns about unauthorised access to Shadwell Quarry and resultant problems with parking, litter, anti-social behaviour and social distancing, Police Inspector Nicola Roberts had accepted an invitation to speak at the meeting. The Mayor welcomed Inspector Roberts.

Inspector Roberts gave an overview of the situation and outlined the police response:

Since the beginning of March the police had received 100 calls relating to Much Wenlock, which was average for the time of year. However, 53 of these had been in relation to Shadwell Quarry, of which 33 had been received in the previous seven days. Due to the current coronavirus restrictions, members of the public were unable to travel to their usual destinations and, during the recent fine weather, Shadwell Quarry had become a popular destination. Concerns reported included parking, large gatherings, concern for safety and anti-social behaviour. However, no crimes had been recorded. It was noted that the police had to consider risk when allocating resources and to prioritise accordingly.

Police officers had been in Much Wenlock, especially at the weekend, to monitor the situation and take action where necessary. It had only been necessary to issue one ticket for obstruction of the highway.

Inspector Roberts had been in touch with the owners of the quarry to request improved fencing and signage and had been assured that work had been carried out. Sale of the quarry was in progress and more action would be taken by the current owners, Willey and Wenlock Estates, if the sale were delayed for more than four weeks.

An individual had been injured at the site over the bank holiday weekend and Inspector Roberts had contacted that person. He had advised that he had seen the quarry advertised on social media as an idyllic beauty spot and had expected it to be a managed site. He had agreed to circulate something via social media about the risks of the site. It was noted that the social media profile of the site did not reflect the reality and it was suggested that the rubbish arising on site be left to discourage visitors.

The police were arranging testing of the pH level of the water in the quarry to check whether the water was safe to swim in.

Shropshire Council had provided cones to prevent visitors parking near the quarry, but this had displaced parking into neighbouring residential streets.

Inspector Roberts outlined what the police could and could not do in response to the situation at and surrounding Shadwell Quarry and responded to questions:

- Covid legislation – the law currently did not allow the police to enforce social distancing, this was a matter of personal responsibility.
- Trespass – the quarry was private property and trespass was a civil, not a criminal, matter. The police had tried to prevent access to the site but could not legally do so.
- Danger of swimming – this was the responsibility of the landowner and the individuals concerned
- Drink driving – the police would need to have reasonable suspicion that a driver had been drinking alcohol or have received a report to that effect
- Drug taking and supply – unless officers were specifically on site to detect such offences, they would need to see an offence being committed
- Anti-social behaviour order – these could be put in place quickly and lasted up to 48 hours. However, they could not be used on private land and the police would need to be certain that members of the community were being harassed and were distressed or that criminal actions were taking place.

Inspector Roberts encouraged members of the community to report problems such as verbal abuse, drunkenness, violence, etc. to the police to evidence the problems and support the need for a dispersal order.

The Mayor thanked Inspector Roberts for her participation in the meeting.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED:

- a. **To reiterate the message to the public to report any concerns associated with Shadwell Quarry to the police.**
- b. **To write to the landowners to push for action to secure the site to prevent access.**
- c. **To request a meeting with the new owners of the site once the sale had been completed to discuss the concerns.**

6. Shropshire Council report

Shropshire Councillor David Turner gave a verbal report.

Councillor Turner reported on highways work in the town, including resurfacing, replacement of street signs and re-painting of car park markings. Proposals such as signage, suspension of parking and one-way traffic were being considered to facilitate social distancing in the town centre when restrictions eased and shops re-opened. A new traffic order prohibiting parking on the roads around Shadwell Quarry had come into force earlier in the day. The need for essential work to gas mains in the town centre had been identified and further details would be available in due course.

Councillor Turner referenced the need for measures to address flooding in the whole of the town, which had been hampered by the coronavirus lockdown. He noted that if individual property resilience funding were allocated it would jeopardise the more strategic funding which might alleviate a significant part of the catchment. Shropshire Council appeared to be moving towards the position where they would rely on flooding attenuation arising from development between Bridgnorth Road and Hunters Gate and Councillor Turner had expressed his concern about this approach.

Review of the Shropshire Local Plan was progressing. An emerging proposal for a large housing and commercial development near Bridgnorth on the A458 between Tasley and Morville Heath, would result in a significant increase in traffic through the Gaskell Arms junction, particularly when combined with proposed development on the Ironbridge Power Station site. A current planning application for Farley Quarry, if approved, would result in up to 100 HGV movements per day, again impacting on the highways around Much Wenlock.

Councillor Turner had raised concerns about the proposal for housing adjacent to Hunters Gate. Whilst the proposal would address flooding in this area it was not a comprehensive plan for the whole of the catchment and would not give protection to other areas of the town. The proposal formed part of the Local Plan, for development up until 2038, and Shropshire Council had little control over when the development might go ahead.

Councillor Turner noted the impact of additional development on services and facilities in the town, including further construction of Park homes.

He expressed the view that affordable housing in the town should be for those with a connection to Much Wenlock, not to Shropshire as a whole.

With regard to the impact of the coronavirus, Councillor Turner noted that Shropshire Council had provided financial support for many businesses affected. Shropshire Council intended to keep car parks free of charge until July to aid recovery in the market towns, but Councillor Turner was pressing for this to continue for longer. The street trading policy was to be examined in detail.

Shropshire Council had carried out litter picking near to Shadwell Quarry and the volunteer litter picks in the town would be resuming soon.

Councillor Turner's advice surgeries were still suspended but he could be contacted by telephone and email.

7. Public session

There had been no requests to speak.

8. Hunters Gate Petition and Drainage

- a. Councillors noted a petition received from residents of Hunters Gate and subsequent correspondence demanding action to deal with the problems of flooding experienced in that area.
- b. Councillors had been in contact with John Bellis, Drainage and Flood Risk Manager, at Shropshire Council, regarding flood alleviation at Hunters Gate.

The Mayor reported that £128,000 had previously been allocated by the English Severn & Wye Regional Flood Coastal Committee to provide property flood resilience to 23 properties in Hunters Gate from a funding pot known as Flood Defence Grant in Aid. However, due to resource and staffing issues it had not been possible to deliver the scheme in 2019/20 and the funding had been deferred into the next six-year programme, which would run from 2021/22 onwards. Of that funding, £20,000 had been retained by Shropshire Council and the Environment Agency to help develop the project further as both Shropshire Council and the Environment Agency had concerns regarding the effectiveness of the current property flood resilience proposals at Hunters Gate.

Town Councillors expressed concerns about the link between housing development and resolution of the flooding problems, as well as the role of Shropshire Council.

The frustration of the residents of Hunters Gate was acknowledged and Councillors assured the residents that they had not been forgotten. The Town Council continued to lobby for flooding attenuation and considered flooding matters at every meeting of the Planning & Environment Committee. However, the design and delivery of an appropriate flood alleviation scheme was in the hands of other organisations and the Town Council could not solve the problems of flooding at Hunters Gate.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to continue to push for flood alleviation for Hunters Gate and the rest of the town.

9. Street Lighting and Drain Clearing in Sheinton Street

It was noted that the three part-night lit street lights in Sheinton Street had been converted to dusk to dawn lighting by Shropshire Council and that the eco kerb drains had been cleared.

Having declared a pecuniary interest in the following item, Councillors Matthew and Natalie Park left the meeting.

10. Reinvigoration of Much Wenlock Town Centre

Councillors considered the need for measures to help reinvigorate Much Wenlock Town Centre following the coronavirus lockdown. The local traders were thanked for their efforts during the lockdown as was Shropshire Council for the free car parking.

It was noted that, to comply with social distancing requirements, more space would be needed for pedestrians in the town centre. It was suggested that more pedestrianisation of the High Street could provide the opportunity for pubs and restaurants in the town to put tables and chairs outside. The Square, as well as the areas under the Corn Exchange and Guildhall might be considered. The current street trading regulations adversely affected the potential for markets and festivals in the town and the Town Council had been in touch with the Licensing officer at Shropshire Council to discuss this.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to suspend standing orders to allow members of the public to speak on the matter.

A member of the public expressed concern about the future of the Christmas Fayre in the light of the current street trading and coronavirus restrictions. It was agreed to add this issue to the agenda of the next full Council meeting for discussion.

It was noted that several pubs and restaurants in the town already had outside space that they could use. Traders were not generally in favour of closing the High Street to traffic, however, Councillors were keen to explore ways of calming the traffic in the High Street to improve pedestrian safety.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to reinvoke standing orders.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to work with Councillor Turner to push for changes to the street trading regulations, to liaise with traders and to continue to consider ways to reinvigorate the town centre.

11. Minutes

The minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 7th May 2020 were considered for approval. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 7th May 2020 be APPROVED and ADOPTED as a true record.**

12. 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 internal audit had been carried out and the report was awaited.

The Mayor and Councillors expressed their pleasure that the new path on the Gaskell Recreation Ground had been completed.

NOTED.

13. Committee Terms of Reference

- a. Following review, **it was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to approve the Terms of Reference for the Planning & Environment Committee**
- b. Following review, **it was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to approve the Terms of Reference for the Finance, Asset Management & HR Committee**

14. Review/appointment of Working Groups and Task & Finish Groups

a. Friends of the Cemetery Working Group

**It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that the following members be appointed:
Councillors Mary Hill, Dafydd Jenkins and Matthew Park**

b. History Working Group (currently Cllrs Hill, Thomas and Walter)

**It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that the following members be appointed:
Councillors Mary Hill, Daniel Thomas and Allan Walter**

c. Communications, Markets and Tourism Working Group

**It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that the following members be appointed:
Councillors Natalie Park, Marcus Themans, Daniel Thomas and Duncan White**

d. Housing Needs Working Group

**It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that the following members be appointed:
Councillors Herbert Harper, Mary Hill and Daniel Thomas. Councillor Natalie Park was also appointed to the working group, subject to a change to the Terms of Reference being agreed, minute 16e.**

e. Grounds Maintenance and Property Maintenance Working Group

**It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that the following members be appointed:
Councillors Dafydd Jenkins, Marcus Themans and Duncan White**

f. It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to rename the Barclays Bank Working Group as the 10 High Street Working Group and to appoint the following members to the 10 High Street Working Group:

Councillors Herbert Harper, Matthew Park, Daniel Thomas, Duncan White and Milner Whiteman

g. It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to absorb the remit of the 10 High Street / Guildhall Consultation Working Group into the 10 High Street Working Group.

15. Review/appointment of representatives on the following

a. Bridgnorth and Shifnal Local Area Committee of SALC

It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** that Councillors Mary Hill and Yvonne Holyoak represent the Town Council.

b. Local Joint Committee

It was noted that there was no funding for the Local Joint Committee and no plans for it to meet. However, should there be a need for the Town Council to provide a representative it was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** that Councillor Yvonne Holyoak represent the Town Council.

It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** to suspend Standing Orders to allow the meeting to continue past 9.00pm.

c. Much Wenlock Almshouses

It was noted that Trevor Childs had been nominated to represent the Town Council in May 2018 for a term of four years. Mr Childs had advised that he did not wish to continue to hold this position.

It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** that Councillor Duncan White represent the Town Council.

d. Shropshire Council Emergency Planning

It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** that Councillor Herbert Harper represent the Town Council.

e. John L Edwards Trust

It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** that Councillor Allan Walter represent the Town Council.

f. Shropshire Hills Destination Partnership

It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** that Councillor Duncan White represent the Town Council.

g. Connexus (affordable homes)

It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** that Councillors Yvonne Holyoak and Milner Whiteman represent the Town Council.

16. Review of Terms of Reference

a. Friends of the Cemetery Working Group

It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** to approve and adopt the Terms of Reference for the Friends of the Cemetery Working Group.

b. History Working Group

It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** to approve and adopt the Terms of Reference for the History Working Group, with the addition of the following responsibility: "To add relevant material to the archives reflecting significant events in Much Wenlock".

Members gave their support to a project instigated by Councillor Hill to document the effects of the coronavirus pandemic on the community of Much Wenlock. The resulting record would be lodged in the archives.

c. Communications, Markets and Tourism Working Group

It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** to approve and adopt the Terms of Reference for the Communications, Markets and Tourism Working Group.

d. 10 High Street Working Group

It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** to approve and adopt the revised Terms of Reference for the 10 High Street Working Group.

e. Housing Needs Working Group

It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** to approve and adopt the Terms of Reference for the Housing Needs Working Group, following amendment of the membership to four members of the Town Council.

f. Grounds Maintenance and Property Maintenance Working Group

It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** to approve and adopt the Terms of Reference for the Grounds Maintenance and Property Maintenance Working Group.

17. Review/adoption of the following:

- a. **Standing Orders**
Following review, it was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** to approve and adopt the revised **Standing Orders**.
- b. **Financial Regulations**
Following review, it was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** to approve and adopt the revised **Financial Regulations**.
- c. **Complaints Procedure**
It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** to approve and adopt the **Code of Practice for Handling Complaints and for Dealing with Unreasonable and Persistent Complainants**.
- d. **Publication Scheme**
It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** to approve and adopt the **Publication Scheme**.
- e. **General Privacy notice**
It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** to approve and adopt the **General Privacy Notice**.
- f. **Privacy notice for Staff and Councillors**
It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** to approve and adopt the **Privacy Notice for Staff and Councillors**.
- g. It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** to defer consideration of the **Communications and Media Policy** to the next meeting.

18. Financial matters

- a. It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** to approve the use of variable **Direct Debits and BACS payments** in accordance with paras. 6.7 and 6.9 of the Council's **Financial Regulations**
- b. Members considered the allocation of the **Neighbourhood Fund** of £12,843.26 received for the financial year 2019/2020. It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** to allocate the **Neighbourhood Fund of £12,843.26** received for the financial year 2019/2020 to **10 High Street, Much Wenlock**.
- c. In addition to existing earmarked reserves, it was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** to approve the allocation of the following as earmarked reserves:
 - £36,000 (Community Levy Allocation) to the **Gaskell Recreation Ground**
 - £14,300 to the **Library**
 - £ 500 to the **Library (double glazing as previously agreed)**
 - £ 641 to the **Archives (for the new cabinet)**
 - £ 500 to the **Bus Shelter (for agreed repair)**
- d. It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** to retrospectively approve payment schedules from **29th January 2020** to date.
- e. It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** to note and retrospectively approve the Clerk's action in paying **£11.99 + VAT** for a monthly **Zoom subscription** with a personal credit card due to the delay in receiving a new debit card from **Barclays Bank**.

19. Asset Register

It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** to approve the **Asset Register** as at **31st March 2020**.

20. Council Email Addresses for Councillors

It was noted that Council email addresses had been set up for all Councillors. It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** that the date for the transfer of all Council communications to the new email addresses would be **1st September 2020**. It was noted that the new email addresses could come into use for individual councillors prior to that date as the transfers were completed. Councillors should advise the Clerk when transfers had been completed.

21. Consultation

No consultation had been received.

22. Correspondence

Members noted the following:

- a. SALC information bulletin and other information – emailed to Members
- b. Ironbridge Power Station Newsletter May 2020 – emailed to Members
- c. Shropshire Council and central government information connected with the coronavirus pandemic – emailed to Members

23. Agenda items for next town council meeting

Members were invited to suggest items for inclusion on the agenda for the next meeting. It was noted that the agenda would include:

- Much Wenlock Christmas Fayre
- Discussion of measures to reinvigorate the town centre following the Coronavirus lockdown

24. Date of next meeting

Members noted that the next meeting was scheduled to take place on 2nd July 2020.

The meeting closed at 9.30pm

Signed

Town Mayor

Date