

MUCH WENLOCK TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
 held remotely by video conference
 at 7 pm on Thursday, 3rd December 2020

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

Town Clerk: Trudi Barrett

In attendance: Reverend Matthew Stafford, Shropshire Councillor David Turner and several members of the public.

1. Chairman's welcome

The Mayor welcomed everybody to the meeting.

He noted the ending of the latest lockdown and re-opening of shops and encouraged everyone to shop locally in the town.

The Mayor reported that he had had the honour of laying a wreath at the Remembrance Sunday service on the church green, where the primary school children had written the names of the local fallen on the wooden crosses. He thanked all those involved with the service. It had been great to light up the church again to give a safe and secure way for people to remember.

The Mayor noted that Magdeleine MacIntyre-Read had recently retired from her position as Guildhall Custodian, a role she had fulfilled for 19 years. He expressed the Council's thanks and best wishes for a happy retirement.

The previous week the Mayor had spent time with residents of the Wheatlands care home via video-conference, which he had very much enjoyed. He had also had the opportunity to meet Mayors and Clerks from other Shropshire Councils, albeit virtually, to share ideas and experiences from the different communities.

The Mayor welcomed PC Jess Hindley to the meeting and thanked her for attending.

The Mayor wished everybody a safe Christmas - although there would be no Fayre this year, there could still be Christmas spirit.

2. Apologies

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to approve the following apologies: Cllr Harper – family commitment, Cllrs Matthew Park, Natalie Park and Marcus Themans – work.

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.

4. Dispensations

None requested.

Item 8 on the agenda was brought forward.

5. Police Report

The Mayor introduced PC Jess Hindley. PC Hindley responded that this was her first meeting of Much Wenlock Town Council, but she would endeavour to join future meetings when possible. PC Hindley noted the current challenging times with regulations surrounding the pandemic and police engagement. There had been little recent anti-social behaviour in the town. Officers had been paying regular visits to William Brookes School to engage with pupils, which was proving helpful. There had recently been attempts to pass counterfeit £50 notes in Much Wenlock and follow up enquiries were ongoing. PC Hindley advised that a member of the policing team usually tried to attend Councillor Turner's surgeries.

Members noted the written report, which had also been provided.

Councillors were pleased to hear that the policing team was engaging with pupils at the secondary school.

PC Hindley was thanked for attending the meeting and encouraged to come again.

6. Shropshire Council report

Shropshire Councillor David Turner gave a verbal report.

He was pleased to see PC Jess Hindley back at work after recovering from Covid-19. The pandemic was likely to be with us into 2021, despite the development of a vaccine. Councillor Turner thanked the many volunteers and health professionals who continued to support others in the community. Support groups had, in turn, been able to seek advice from Shropshire Council, who had set up community reassurance teams.

Councillor Turner advised that there had been a delay in progress with the Local Plan after receipt of some 2,600 submissions during the Regulation 18 consultation period. Some allocations had been altered but not that for Much Wenlock. Councillor Turner had asked a Member's question and was expecting a response at the Shropshire Council Cabinet meeting the following week with regard to the likelihood of the Much Wenlock Place Plan area seeing a doubling of population as a result of the Wenlock, Buildwas and Cressage development proposals. The planning application for Buildwas Power Station was expected to be considered by Shropshire Council's Southern Planning Committee in February.

Councillor Turner's next advice surgery would be held on 19th December at Much Wenlock Museum and he invited a member of the Town Council to join him.

He wished everyone a Merry Christmas and a happier and healthier new year.

Councillor Turner was asked for further clarification of the timescale for the Local Plan. He advised that it was anticipated that Cabinet would submit the final draft for Regulation 19 consultation on 7th December. In March the Plan would go to the full Council and then, if passed, to the Planning Inspectorate. A number of hearings would be held by the Planning Inspector during 2021 with the expectation that the Plan would be adopted by Shropshire Council in Spring 2022.

Councillor Turner was thanked for his report.

7. Public session

There had been no requests to speak.

8. Minutes

- a. The minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 5th November 2020 were considered for approval.
It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 5th November 2020 be APPROVED and ADOPTED as a true record.
- b. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that the minutes of the Planning & Environment Committee meeting held on 6th October 2020 be ADOPTED.**
- c. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that the minutes of the Finance, Asset Management & HR Committee meeting held on 20th October 2020 be ADOPTED.**

9. 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 Clerk advised that administrative staff were currently working in the office or from home on a rota basis to minimise contact.

Members **NOTED** the report.

10. External Audit Report

Members **NOTED** that the external audit had been completed and the auditor, PKF Littlejohn LLP, had confirmed that the information contained within Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return was in accordance with Proper Practices and no other matters had come to their attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements had not been met. Thanks were expressed to the staff.

11. Reinvigoration of Much Wenlock Town Centre

- a. Members **NOTED** a report on progress with the initiatives financed by the Small Market Town Support Fund grant of £5,000. Business coaching had been delivered to local traders and there had been excellent feedback. Provision of signage was under way to encourage those who might otherwise drive by to come into the town, and the promotional videos were nearing completion.
- b. Members **NOTED** that parking would be free in all Shropshire Council car parks from 3rd December 2020 to 17th January 2021, between 11am and 6pm. It was understood that this would be well publicised as it applied to the whole of Shropshire.

12. Town Centre Highways

- a. Members considered the draft Terms of Reference for the working group. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to name the working group the Transport Working Group and to approve the draft Terms of Reference.**
- b. It was **NOTED** that members of the group had held initial discussions, but there were no easy solutions to the transport problems in the town. Work was ongoing.

13. 10 High Street

Members **NOTED** a report from the working group. The group was currently reviewing the viability of suggestions received for the future use of the premises, which included a community hub, a working from home scheme and use as a Town Council office.

14. William Brookes School

Members considered correspondence received from William Brookes School regarding a proposal to enter into a partnership with a multi-academy trust, the 3-18 Education Trust. It was noted that the Head Teacher had offered to answer any questions arising. It was understood that membership of the multi academy trust allowed the member schools to share staffing and other resources and provided an opportunity to widen the curriculum, as well as giving economies of scale.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to support the proposal for William Brookes School to enter a partnership with a multi-academy trust, in particular, the 3-18 Education Trust.

It was agreed that the Clerk and Councillor Hill should draft an appropriate response, including the hope that greater community use of the school facilities would be possible.

15. Report from AGM of Shropshire Association of Local Councils (SALC)

Councillor Holyoak provided a report on the recent SALC AGM which, this year, had been held via Zoom video conference. The guest speaker had been Jonathan Owen, CEO of the National Association of Local Councils, who had spoken on the theme of community, caring and supporting and his hope that recent initiatives would continue. He had noted the fast response that local councils had been able to provide to support their communities during the pandemic. The Audit Commission had been surprised at how well local councils had embraced remote meetings and were gathering opinions on whether local councils would like to retain the right to meet remotely into the future. During the business of the AGM all honorary officers had been returned unopposed. A slight increase in affiliation fees had been agreed to reflect inflation. 90% of local councils in Shropshire were now members of SALC.

Members noted that there were some benefits to remote meetings and that it could be helpful to have the option of both face to face and remote meetings in future.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to advise SALC of the Town Council's support for the right to continue to be able to hold remote meetings.

16. The High Sheriff of Shropshire's Outstanding Young Citizen Awards 2021

Members noted correspondence regarding the above. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to defer consideration of the matter to the next meeting, when Members would agree whether to make a nomination.**

17. Lord-Lieutenant's Garden Party June 2021

Members noted correspondence regarding the above. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to nominate Sara Thomas, co-ordinator of Much Wenlock Mutual Aid, and the Mayor to attend the Garden Party.**

18. Consultation

Councillors considered a response to the following consultation:

- a. Shropshire Council's Draft Community and Rural Strategy 2020, open until 6th December 2020.
It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to support the strategy, particularly the aim to attract and keep young people in the county.
- b. Shropshire Council's Vibrant Cultural Strategy 2021-2031, open until 5th January 2021.
It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that Councillors Hill, Holyoak and Walter should compose a response on behalf of the Council.

19. Christmas Closure of Office

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to close the Town Council office for the Christmas period, between 21st December 2020 and 1st January 2021, reopening on 4th January 2021.

20. Correspondence

Members received and noted the following, which had been emailed to Members:

- a. SALC information bulletin and other information
- b. Shropshire Council Press Releases
- c. Rural Bulletins
- d. Invitation to Shropshire Affordable Warmth Network Meeting on 25th November 2020.
- e. Report on Home Care from Healthwatch Shropshire
- f. Community Reassurance Updates from Shropshire Council
- g. Homer & Wigwig Community Group Newsletter November 2020

21. Agenda items for next town council meeting

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

- Update on project to gather local experiences of the pandemic

22. Date of next meeting

Members noted that the next meeting was scheduled to take place on 14th January 2021.

The meeting closed at 8.05pm.

Signed Date
Town Mayor

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