

MUCH WENLOCK TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
held at The Guildhall, Much Wenlock
at 7 pm on Thursday, 24th June 2021

Present: Cllr. Michael Atherton, Cllr. David Fenwick, Cllr Wilfred Grainger, Cllr. John O'Dowd, Cllr. Marcus Themans, Cllr. Daniel Thomas (in the chair), Cllr Robert Toft, Cllr. Duncan White.

Town Clerk: Trudi Barrett

In attendance: Police Sergeant Kate Øen, several members of the public.

1. Chairman's Welcome

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. He was very pleased that after 15 months the Town Council was once again able to meet in the Guildhall, its historic home. The meeting was also accessible via a Zoom link, giving members of the public the opportunity to listen to the meeting remotely.

The Mayor reported that further pigeon proofing works had been completed to the outside of the Guildhall to protect the building and the pavement and public below.

The Mayor was sad to report that Margaret Attwood had passed away. Margaret had served as a Town Councillor for many years and the Mayor offered condolences to her family.

As Much Wenlock slowly moved out of the pandemic, the markets were picking up again with a variety of different stalls, both returners and new.

The launch of the book 'Wenlock's Covid Chronicles' would take place on Saturday, 3rd July in The Square, between 10am and 1pm. On the same day, at 10am, former Councillor Milner Whiteman would be presented with the Freedom of the Town. All were welcome to attend.

2. Apologies for Absence

It was RESOLVED to accept the following apologies: Councillors Mike Grace, Sam Neal and Chris Tyler, who were away.

Apologies were also received from PC Jess Hindley, who was on other duties.

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

Councillor Daniel Thomas had requested and been granted a dispensation with regard to agenda item 15.

5. Shropshire Council Report

Shropshire Councillor Daniel Thomas gave a verbal report.

The previous week the Buildwas planning application had gone to Shropshire Council's Southern Planning Committee and representations had been made by Councillor Thomas as Shropshire Councillor, Councillor White as the Town Council's Chair of the Planning & Environment Committee and Clare Wild as Shropshire Councillor for the area, as well as other parish councils and members of the public. Councillor Thomas had focused on the inadequacies of the plan for the Gaskell corner and limited financial support available. A recording of the meeting was available to view on YouTube. The application had been delayed until it became clear why the viability assessment had not been published and why there was a 75% reduction in provision of affordable homes. Councillor Thomas had been pleased to see protestors outside the meeting and at the Gaskell corner, highlighting the highways issues for Much Wenlock.

On 15th July Shropshire Council would decide whether to submit the Draft Local Plan to the Planning Inspectorate for Examination in Public.

On highways matters, the 37 Barrow Street had been sold and the long awaited removal of the safety fencing and erection of scaffolding for repair to the building was imminent. A productive meeting had also been held with the parking enforcement team at Shropshire Council to request further support for dealing with pavement parking in areas such as Back Lane but more leniency in other areas, where appropriate. Councillor Thomas had passed on his concerns about the difficulties experienced by mobility scooter users in the town.

6. Police Report

The Mayor welcomed Sgt Kate Øen to the meeting. Sgt Øen had recently joined the local team and was based out of Bridgnorth. She was keen to get to know the area and build good relationships with the local communities. Sgt Øen presented the police report, which had been circulated to Councillors.

The Mayor thanked Sgt Øen for attending.

7. Public Session

There had been no requests to speak.

8. Minutes

- a. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to approve and adopt the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 3rd June 2021.**
- b. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to adopt the minutes of the Planning & Environment Committee meeting held on 4th May 2021.**

9. Town Clerk's Report

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

The Clerk confirmed that the policing priorities identified by the Council had been submitted and a 'contract' provided by the local team.

Councillors queried the situation with regard to development of a strategic plan for the Council. The Clerk was asked to add this item to the agenda of the next meeting to re-start the process.

10. Internal Audit Report

Members considered and noted the final internal audit report for the financial year 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021, dated 4th June 2021. The internal auditor had raised no concerns.

11. Annual Accounts 2020/21

- a. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to approve income and expenditure from 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021.**
- b. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to approve the balance sheet as at 31st March 2021.**
- c. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to approve the bank reconciliation as at 31st March 2021.**

12. Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2020/2021

- a. Members noted the Annual Internal Audit Report 2020/21 forming part of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return and the accompanying explanation for Trust Funds Response.
- b. Members considered the Town Council's response to Section 1 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to approve the Annual Governance Statement, confirming that there was a sound system of internal control, including arrangements for the preparation of the Accounting Statements.**
- c. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to approve the Accounting Statements for 2020/2021 (Section 2).**
- d. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to approve the Explanation of Variances.**
- e. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to approve the reconciliation between boxes 7 and 8 in Section 2.**
- f. Members noted that the period for the exercise of public rights would run from Monday, 28th June 2021 to Friday, 6th August 2021.

13. Additional Planning & Environment Committee Meeting

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to hold an additional meeting of the Planning & Environment Committee on Tuesday, 27th July due to the length of time between scheduled meetings arising from the summer break.

14. Planning Applications 19/05509/MAW and 19/05560/OUT: Ironbridge Power Station

Councillors reviewed the outcome of consideration of the above applications at the Shropshire Council Southern Planning Committee meeting held on 15th June 2021.

Councillor White had spoken on behalf of the Town Council and Councillor Thomas, as Shropshire Councillor for Much Wenlock. In their objections they had included comments on the poor affordable housing provision proposed and the impact of the additional traffic on the town. A number of Town Councillors had demonstrated outside the building. Representatives from other areas had also voiced objections, raising similar and additional concerns. The developer's viability assessment had not been made public and there had been calls for this to be provided. The meeting had been live streamed and there had been positive press coverage for Much Wenlock.

Having taken account of the objections, the Southern Planning Committee had agreed to defer the decision on application 19/05560/OUT for up to 1,000 dwellings, and associated other development.

Application 19/05509/MAW, for the phased extraction of sand and gravel, had been permitted although implementation of this permission would be dependent on the outcome of the housing application.

Councillors expressed their thanks to Councillors White and Thomas for speaking on behalf of the town. It was reassuring that the Southern Planning Committee had taken notice of the arguments made.

Following the previous Town Council meeting, a letter had been sent to Philip Dunne MP asking that he request that the application be called in. It was noted that if the proposed boundary changes went ahead, Philip Dunne's constituency area would be altered to include Buildwas. There had been no formal response, but informal discussions had taken place and the MP understood the Council's concerns. A member of the public had also written to the Secretary of State to request that the application be called in and this was under consideration.

Councillors noted a letter received from a member of the public regarding application 19/05560/OUT, which advocated the use of the Existing Use Value (EUV) rather than the actual price paid for the land in assessing the viability of the development and the percentage of affordable housing to be provided. The Town Council was asked to write to the People Overview Committee at Shropshire Council to support this view. The correspondent had written to the Planning Casework Unit asking the Secretary of State to consider 'calling-in' the application and urged the Town Council to submit their own representation.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to support the request for the application to be 'called-in' by writing to the Secretary of State.

15. Shropshire Council Local Plan 2016 – 2038 and Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan

Councillors considered the response received from Shropshire Council to correspondence from the Town Council regarding proposals for Much Wenlock contained within the draft Local Plan 2016 – 2038 and review of the Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan.

Shropshire Council's Planning Policy & Strategy Manager had replied and had also discussed the matter with the Mayor/Shropshire Councillor. The Town Council had been advised that if the response to the Regulation 19 consultation was withdrawn, this would leave the Town Council with no 'duly made' representations. The new 'non-duly made' representations could be submitted as supplementary information for the Planning Inspector to consider. The Planning Policy & Strategy Manager saw no fundamental contradiction between the original Regulation 19 comments and the new comments, although he accepted the new comment provided a clear objection.

Shropshire Council would be happy to work with the Town Council on any refresh of the Neighbourhood Development Plan, as long as this was not a vehicle to promote an anti-development view, which would be unlikely to receive support through an Examination process. It was also advised that this could not re-open the debate about the allocation of land at Hunters Gate, but could develop a suite of more localised development management policies.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to submit the agreed new comments as a 'non-duly made' representation and to retain the existing Regulation 19 comments as a 'duly made' representation.

16. Transport Working Group Terms of Reference

Councillors reviewed the name and Terms of Reference for the Transport Working Group.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to approve the Terms of reference, with the following amendments: the Chair of the working group to be a Town Councillor; the addition of the phrase 'and other local transport issues' to responsibility 1.

17. Remote Audio Streaming of Full Council Meetings and Provision of Recordings

Councillors considered whether to continue to provide audio streaming and recordings of full Council meetings for the general public following the return to face to face Council meetings.

It was RESOLVED to suspend Standing Orders.

Members of the public listening to the meeting on the active Zoom link confirmed that they could hear the proceedings at the meeting on the active Zoom link.

It was RESOLVED to reinvoke Standing Orders.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to continue to live stream full Council meetings via Zoom.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to record meetings, ensuring that all those present were made aware that the meetings would be recorded, audio only, and to upload the recordings onto YouTube.

It was noted that it could be helpful to have better microphones in the Guildhall.

18. 'The Queen's Green Canopy'

Members considered correspondence from Her Majesty's Lord Lieutenant of Shropshire and NACO regarding 'The Queen's Green Canopy', a tree planting project to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

Councillors considered that this was a very worthwhile initiative. The planting of indigenous trees was urged, not conifers, and Members noted that the Tree Forum could be asked for advice. Councillor O'Dowd undertook to seek advice on behalf of the Council.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to support the 'Queen's Green Canopy' initiative, to raise public awareness and to ask relevant committees to consider where trees might be planted.

19. The Queen's Platinum Jubilee Beacons 2nd June 2022

Members noted information regarding the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Beacons 2nd June 2022.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to support and participate in the Beacon event.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to set up a working group to take this forward, comprising Councillors Themans, Thomas and White, and to invite appropriate members of the public to become involved.

20. Police & Crime Commissioner's Safer Roads Fund

Members noted information regarding the Police & Crime Commissioner's Safer Roads Fund.

Councillors were unclear whether the scheme was supported by West Mercia Police and Shropshire Council and raised concerns about the difficulty of initiating traffic calming measures in the town.

It was RESOLVED to suspend Standing Orders to allow Sgt Øen to speak.

Sgt Øen advised that actions followed evidence and that the impetus to introduce traffic calming measures came from accident figures. Sgt Øen referenced the Local Policing Charter, which the Town Council had recently considered. Members considered that the initiatives supported by the Safer Roads Fund were unlikely to be of benefit in Much Wenlock and that permanent solutions were required not, for example, temporary awareness campaigns. Sgt Øen offered to raise the Council's concerns with the Police Inspector and Chief Inspector.

It was RESOLVED to resume Standing Orders.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to note the information regarding the Police & Crime Commissioner's Safer Roads Fund but not to submit an application.

21. Police & Crime Commissioner – Town and Parish Council Survey 2021

Members noted the Police & Crime Commissioner's Town and Parish Council Survey 2021.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that Councillors Fenwick and White should complete the survey on behalf of the Council.

22. Correspondence

Members **NOTED** the following:

- a. SALC information bulletin and other information.
- b. Friendly Bus Newsletter June 2021.
- c. Police Newsletter June 2021.
- d. Rural Bulletins from the Rural Services Network.

23. Agenda Items for Next Town Council Meeting

Members were invited to suggest items for inclusion on the agenda for the next meeting on 8th July:

Strategic Plan - how to move forward

24. Date of next meeting

Members noted that the next meeting would be held at 7.00pm on Thursday, 8th July 2021 at the Guildhall.

Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960

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

25. Arrangements for Guildhall and Corn Exchange Cleaning

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to delegate authority to the recruitment panel to appoint a new cleaner for the Guildhall and Corn Exchange.

The meeting closed at 8.35pm

Signed
Town Mayor

Date