

MUCH WENLOCK TOWN COUNCIL

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

Present: Cllr. Michael Atherton, Cllr. David Fenwick, Cllr Mike Grace, Cllr Wilfred Grainger, Cllr. John O’Dowd, Cllr. Marcus Themans, Cllr Robert Toft, Cllr Chris Tyler, Cllr. Duncan White (in the Chair)

Town Clerk: Trudi Barrett

In attendance: Four members of the public

1. Chairman’s Welcome

The Deputy Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting and presented the following report, which had been prepared by the Mayor:

“September saw the Wenlock Olympian games of 2021, which was very well attended, despite the circumstances, and a great success. It was special for me to give out medals to competitors after receiving medals from the Mayor when I competed; Gold in under 15 boys 100m if anyone’s wondering!

On items regarding the Gaskell field, it’s great to have the hedges cut. My dad cut them using his tractor and hedge cutter with myself, Cllr Themans and White on hand to keep an eye on members of the public, ensuring they were out of harm’s way.

The October exhibition in the Guildhall is from the Victory Painting Group with mixed artwork by local artists for sale at affordable prices.

Last month saw a Wenlock business win an award from ‘Surfers Against Sewage’ due to the near non-existence of single-use plastic in her shop. Again, I’d like to congratulate Sam Beech on the award and thank her for adding such an essential shop to our high street.

Last weekend marked the end of an era for Much Wenlock, with Catherine’s Bakery closed down at such short notice. I believe I speak for all in this Council chamber in saying that our town is poorer without a bakery and we hope that in future one will return, which allows an opportunity for a new entrepreneur or business. Our thoughts are with the staff and we hope they can find work soon.

On a happier note, last month saw the retirement of a Wenlock great in John Cumberland, who retired from his ministry. John began his time in Wenlock as a spiritual seeker, and a contented, quiet, reflective member of the congregation, before God called him first as a Lay Reader and then an Associate Priest. Much Wenlock and its outlying villages have valued his ministry greatly and, on behalf of the Town Council, we thank him and wish him well.

Finally, as the Town Council enjoys promoting local books: Sacrum Obumbratio, a Pilgrim’s Spiritual Companion to the Sacred Shadows of Wenlock Priory by Reverend Matthew Stafford, is on sale from Wednesday 13th October. You can purchase a copy from Croft Design or the Linden Tree.”

2. Apologies for Absence

It was RESOLVED to accept the following apologies: Cllr Daniel Thomas, Mayor – wife went into labour, Cllr Sam Neal - 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.

5. Shropshire Council Report

The following report was presented on behalf of Shropshire Councillor, Daniel Thomas:

“At our last meeting, I expressed the pleasure of a great result at August’s Southern Planning Committee and my dismay that the application was back on the agenda. I am somewhat at a loss for words to describe the meeting in September; the debate was fraught with inaccuracies on the Gaskell Corner. One Councillor left the meeting and came back but still voted, and the crucial transport document around the Gaskell corner was only uploaded to the portal AFTER the meeting. Credit to Councillor White for making this point during the meeting.

I focussed my speech again on the Gaskell corner and the inaccurate transport modelling and concentrated some ire on the shambles of the affordable housing provision. Much Wenlock was just 3 miles away; many in housing need could have taken up these homes.

Overall, it's much better than we had initially with an extra £100,000 for our transport study and an additional 5% affordable homes. We have reasons to be positive, but there is much to consider when we reach this item on the agenda.

Closer to home, the town has had extensive cleaning of its drains over the last two weeks, which are vital in its flooding mitigation, and the National Flood Forum were in town yesterday where they held a meeting with residents. The highway repairs to potholes are set to continue, anything that is marked with white is on the work log. If it's not on there, then please use 'Fix my Street' which is slowly replacing the now defunct 'My Shropshire'.

As it affects Much Wenlock and potentially items on this agenda, it's important to note the changes in Shropshire Council's cabinet due to the sad resignation of Steve Charmley. He will be replaced as deputy leader by Loton Councillor Ed Potter, who will remain portfolio holder for economic growth, regeneration and planning. Battlefield Councillor Dean Carroll will now take charge of Councillor Charmley's portfolio, which also includes physical infrastructure and housing.

The draft of the Local Plan was submitted on 3rd September and the Secretary of State has appointed Planning Inspectors Louise Crosby and Carole Dillon to carry out an independent examination which assesses whether the draft local plan meets the tests of soundness defined in the national planning policy framework.

Last thing to note is that there will be a road closure on 24th October for anchor bolt testing affecting the High Street, Wilmore Street and Barrow Street and the road will be closed in Brockton on 26th October due to works on the Bridge."

6. Police Report

Members of the local policing team had sent their apologies.

- a. Members noted that PC Jess Hindley had moved to the Youth Engagement Team in Shrewsbury and was no longer part of the Much Wenlock policing team.

Councillors RESOLVED to pass on their thanks to PC Hindley.

- b. Councillors noted the written report from the Local Policing Team.

7. Public Session

A member of the public from Crosshouses expressed his concern at the handling of the application for the Ironbridge Power Station at the Shropshire Council Southern Planning Committee meeting. He noted that some Councillors who had previously voted against the application had this time voted in favour, despite there being no material change to the application. He also made the point that some of the affordable homes proposed were now for older people, so there was less opportunity for younger people to obtain. He was interested in what action Much Wenlock Town Council might decide to take following the decision to approve the application. He noted that the Prime Minister had made a recent statement about reducing the amount of greenfield development in favour of brownfield and that as only one third of the land at the Power Station was brownfield, this might provide an extra angle for further opposition to the application.

8. Minutes

- a. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to approve and adopt the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 2nd September 2021.**
- b. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to adopt the minutes of the Planning & Environment Committee meeting held on 27th July 2021.**
- c. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to adopt the minutes of the Finance & Asset Management Committee meeting held on 20th July 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.

10. External Audit

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.

Members expressed their thanks to the RFO and Town Clerk.

11. Welcome Back Fund

Members noted that Shropshire Council had given agreement in principle for funding for Christmas lighting and that quotations were being obtained by officers. It was noted that the new lights would not be ready for this year's display and that it was intended to place the order early next year, when availability and pricing was expected to be better.

12. Ironbridge Power Station Planning Application (ref. 19/05560/OUT)

- a. Members noted that the planning application for the Ironbridge Power Station had been approved by Shropshire Council's Southern Planning Committee on 20th September 2021.
- b. Members considered whether to take any further action regarding this application. They noted the following points:
 - The highways report had been issued too late for consideration
 - Harworth had allocated an additional £100,000 for highways measures to address issues at the Gaskell corner, making the total amount £350,000, with £50,000 intended for a feasibility study. However, Harworth was not providing any of the additional money. The funding allocated was insignificant to the potential overall cost of the required scheme, which could be anything between £3 and £5 million.
 - The Town Council could go to the ombudsman and make a complaint of maladministration, but this would probably have no effect on the actions taken by Shropshire Council.
 - The Power Station was a strategic site in the Local Plan with a wide, cross-boundary impact, including highways and affordable housing.
 - One of the Shropshire Councillors did leave the room during the discussion but even without his vote the decision would still have gone in favour of approval of the application.
 - The statement made by the Prime Minister with regard to brownfield development was not in legislation and would take considerable time to come through.
 - The proposal pre-empted the public examination of the Local Plan, where strategic proposals would be considered.
 - The Secretary of State would not consider procedural matters. Should the application be called in, the Secretary of State would appoint an inspector to run the enquiry.

It was RESOLVED to compose a letter containing additional representations for submission to the Secretary of State supporting the request already made to 'call in' the application.

It was RESOLVED to contact other parishes affected, to provide details of actions being taken by Much Wenlock Town Council and urge them to write to the Secretary of State.

It was RESOLVED to write to Philip Dunne MP again as well as to Daniel Kawczynski MP and Lucy Allan MP inviting them to support the call-in request.

It was RESOLVED to write to Shropshire Council expressing concern about procedural issues and asking for an explanation; why was information not available as it should have been?

13. Shropshire Council Local Plan Review

- a. Members considered a report and recommendations from the meeting held with Shropshire Council's Planning Policy & Strategy Manager on 15th September 2021. It was noted that the discussion had been useful and that the officer had been open and honest and had acknowledged the traffic problems. Councillor Grace was thanked for chairing the meeting and preparing the report.

It was RESOLVED to write to Shropshire Council to ask why Shropshire Council did not change its mind and alter the Draft Local Plan when requested by the newly elected Town Council in June this year.

- b. It was noted that the Planning & Environment Committee had considered preparations for the Examination in Public and agreed a list of groups to invite to the consultation event planned for 3rd November. The format of the meeting was to be agreed.

14. Terms of Reference for Shropshire Local Plan Review Working Group

It was RESOLVED to approve the draft Terms of Reference for the Shropshire Local Plan Review Working Group, with the following addition under Responsibilities: "Via the Town Clerk, to incur minor administrative costs such as room hire, refreshments and printing."

15. Guildhall

- a. Members noted that work to the Guildhall cupola was scheduled to begin on 6th October and was expected to take 4 – 6 weeks.
- b. Members noted that the Guildhall would be closing to the public for the winter at the end of October.

16. Made in Shropshire Markets

Members considered a proposal from Councillor White to hold 'Made in Shropshire' markets in the town. It was suggested that there could be three trial markets in the High Street on the third Saturdays of April, June and August. The Town Council would apply for the required road closure and appoint a liaison person. 'Made in Shropshire' would handle all other arrangements including licencing, insurance, stalls and set up. The matching stalls would be located on the George & Dragon side of the road in the parking spaces. It was noted that emergency access would need to be maintained. There would be around 20 high quality stalls, all businesses based in Shropshire.

Members noted that additional public toilets and parking would be required. Local landowners could be approached with regard to parking and some charities were prepared to provide volunteers to marshall parking if they could make a collection.

It was RESOLVED to suspend standing orders to allow a member of the public to speak.

The member of the public advised that if fields were to be used for parking, wet weather, livestock movement and co-ordination with other local events would need to be considered.

It was RESOLVED to reinvoke standing orders.

It was RESOLVED to approve the outline plan to trial three markets in 2022, subject to confirmation of all necessary arrangements, and for the Communications, Markets and Tourism Working Group to take the project forward.

17. Remembrance Services

- a. **It was RESOLVED to approve the holding of a short service of remembrance at the Corn Exchange on Thursday, 11th November.**
- b. **It was RESOLVED to approve the holding of a remembrance service for primary school children in the Cemetery on Friday, 12th November.**

18. Arrangements for Christmas Lights Switch-on

It was RESOLVED to hold a Christmas Lights Switch-on event on Thursday, 25th November at 6pm with low-key entertainment. Arrangements should be made for a road closure for the High Street and for first aid cover.

19. Arrangements for Christmas Closure of Office

It was RESOLVED that the Council office would be closed for the festive period between 23rd December 2021 and 3rd January 2022, re-opening on 4th January 2022.

20. Consultation

Members noted the following consultation and considered a response from the Town Council:

- a. West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner's draft Safer West Mercia Plan 2021-2025 – closing date 1st November 2021. **It was RESOLVED to approve and submit the response prepared by Councillor Toft.**
- b. Shropshire Health & Wellbeing Strategy refresh 2022-2027 – closing date 8th November 2021. Councillors were invited to make individual responses.

21. Correspondence

Members noted the following items:

- a. SALC information bulletin and other information
- b. Friendly Bus Newsletter October 2021
- c. Rural Bulletins from the Rural Services Network
- d. Community Reassurance update 24.09.21
- e. Press release from Healthwatch Shropshire 09.09.21: Healthwatch Shropshire finds people across the county are struggling to get treatment from a local NHS dentist
- f. Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership newsletter September 2021
- g. The Forum – Shropshire Seniors Magazine September 2021
- h. South Shropshire Youth Network – Final Report on Youth Consultation May/June 2021
- i. SALC Members and Community Survey Results and Feedback Report June 2021

22. Agenda Items for Next Town Council Meeting

Members suggested the following item for inclusion on the agenda for the next meeting:

Report back from consultation meeting on 3rd November

23. Date of next meeting

Members noted that the next meeting would be held at 7.00pm on Thursday, 4th November 2021 at 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. Complaint

Councillors considered progress with a complaint from a member of the public.

The meeting closed at 9pm.

Signed
Town Mayor

Date