

MUCH WENLOCK TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
held at The Guildhall, Much Wenlock
at 7 pm on Thursday, 4th November 2021

Present: Cllr Mike Grace, Cllr Wilfred Grainger, Cllr. John O'Dowd, Cllr. Marcus Themans, Cllr Robert Toft, Cllr Daniel Thomas (in the chair), Cllr Chris Tyler, Cllr. Duncan White

Town Clerk: Trudi Barrett

In attendance: Several members of the public

1. Chairman's Welcome

The Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting and presented the following report:

"Firstly, on a personal note, I'd like to thank everyone for good wishes and generous gifts on the birth of my son Eric Jack Thomas. I'm pleased to say that both baby and mother are doing well. The last month has been genuinely chaotic, so please bear with me as I get everything under control!

I've been informed that a new bakery/sandwich shop is to take on the old Catherine's bakery site at the end of the month, and on behalf of this Town Council, I welcome the fact that a new bakery is coming in. The shop will be run by the same business owners who have the Wenlock Smoothie, and we wish them well in this new venture.

Some good Christmas events are being planned as we speak with this Council organising a Christmas Lights switch-on event for Thursday 25th November starting at 5:30 pm, which nicely coincides with the Holy Trinity Church's Christmas tree festival, which begins on the same day. Not forgetting the pièce de resistance, the Much Wenlock Christmas Fayre, taking place on Saturday, 4th December.

Last night saw a consultation event regarding the Local Plan and its Examination in Public. Community groups from all aspects of Much Wenlock life sent representatives to discuss the plan and the upcoming stages. I want to thank the Planning Committee for organising such an important event, which ran very smoothly and was essential for community engagement.

As you will have seen tonight, on the way in, the Town Council is carefully using resources to look after this wonderful building that we meet in. The cupola has been safely removed and is now undergoing much-needed repair.

October saw the hard work of the Gaskell Management Committee come to fruition, with the planting of wildflower seeds across the top part of the ground. A big well done to the Committee as the wildflowers not only look great but also provide a critical habitat and food source for our pollinators.

As it's Remembrance time, the Poppy Appeal has a stand every day from 9 am – 3 pm, and it's great to see a mix of Councillors and members of the public volunteering to run the stand. The Remembrance service on Sunday, 14th November will be an open-air drumhead service on the Church Green, starting at 10:50 am."

2. Apologies for Absence

Members RESOLVED to accept the following apologies: Cllr David Fenwick – unwell, Cllr Sam Neal – work, Cllr Mike Atherton – family commitment.

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

Shropshire Councillor, Daniel Thomas, presented the following report:

"With great disappointment, our call-in request regarding Buildwas Power Station planning application has failed; we're discussing this later, so I won't dwell on it now. I've had an invitation from the applicants, Harworth, to see the

options for the Revolution Very Light Railway, essentially an energy-saving hybrid train that it is hoped will be used to connect Buildwas to Telford and beyond without the use of cars.

Our local policing team is asking people to sign up for Neighbourhood Watch Alerts, where you can receive updates on crime and other issues affecting Much Wenlock and its wider area. You can sign up online or with a paper copy, and I will make the details of how to do this available, as the updates are handy.

Last month I mentioned that I was sad to see PC Jess Hindley transfer to another area, but I'm pleased to report that a new police constable for the Much Wenlock area has been appointed, and we'll receive information on who this is and when they start soon.

On the A458 near the entrance to Edge Adventure, the top of Harley Bank continues to have problems with traffic collisions. To help discuss options on mitigating this, I've arranged a meeting with Sergeant Kate Øen, and I hope to have an officer from Shropshire Council present.

The High Street will be closed on Thursday, 25th November for the Christmas lights switch-on event, which is on the agenda for later. "

6. Police Report

The Local Policing Team had sent their apologies. Members noted the written report provided.

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 7th October 2021, as amended.**
- b. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to adopt the minutes of the Planning & Environment Committee meeting held on 31st August 2021.**
- c. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to adopt the minutes of the Finance & Asset Management Committee meeting held on 21st September 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 advised that a meeting to discuss a strategic plan for the Town Council would be arranged when convenient. The Clerk reported a positive meeting with Grange Fencing to discuss greater community involvement. Members noted that Grange Fencing had agreed to provide parking for the Christmas Fayre park-and-ride scheme.

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

- a. Members noted that the Town Council's request for the application for the Ironbridge Power Station to be called in by the Secretary of State had been refused.
- b. Members expressed their disappointment at the above. The Town Council had worked hard to put the case for Much Wenlock. It was noted that an extra £100,000 of funding had been promised towards improvements for the Gaskell corner, although this was unlikely to be enough. There was little more the Town Council could do at this stage except await the outcome of the feasibility study. Philip Dunne MP might be invited to visit to aid his understanding of the problems and concerns of the town.

It was noted that a complaint about procedural issues associated with Shropshire Council's consideration of the application had not been submitted yet. Councillors considered that this was still worthwhile and the Clerk was asked to lodge the Town Council's complaint.

It was RESOLVED to write to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities to ask for a full explanation of the decision not to call in the Ironbridge Power Station application and how it had been possible for such a quick determination to be made.

11. Consultation event regarding Shropshire Draft Local Plan (2016 - 2038)

Members considered a report on the Town Council's local consultation event for Much Wenlock groups, organisations and support services, held on 3rd November 2021, regarding the Local Plan and its Examination in Public.

The event had been well attended, with around 25 people from different groups, including the medical practice, fire service and church. Participants had been invited to share their views to help the Council form its case for the Examination in Public next year.

Participants had chosen for discussion the themes of transport, water, heritage & tourism, healthcare & education and development. Councillors had facilitated discussion of the themes on different tables and participants had moved around to discuss different issues.

Councillor Tyler had facilitated the theme of Healthcare & Education. There had been a focus on infrastructure problems, the lack of facilities at the medical practice and concerns about expansion of the schools.

Councillor White had facilitated Water - flooding, fresh water, sewage and pluvial water. The discussions had revolved around responsibility and the need to update and maintain current systems, which simply could not cope. Better checks should be made at the planning stage of any developments with developers being held responsible for systems installed so that drainage was adequate for the development. The possibility of natural solutions, including planting were also discussed.

Councillor Grainger had facilitated Heritage and Tourism. There was a strong feeling that more could be made of the town's heritage and assets, including those belonging to the Town Council. Questions about funding were also raised. With regard to the Local Plan, participants questioned whether there had been an opportunity to ensure that new housing would be built in line with the history and heritage of the town and would enhance Much Wenlock. Should free parking be considered? Was the Local Plan the right place to pick up these themes or was it time to look at the Neighbourhood Plan again?

Councillor Thomas had facilitated Development. This had encompassed affordable housing, climate friendly homes, passive house status, the importance of local connections, the type and size of houses. Sustainable development was desired with the right range of housing to attract a mix of people.

Councillor Grace had facilitated Transport. Participants could only see an increase in traffic with implications in terms of air pollution. There was no obvious solution for dealing with this. Options might be the pedestrianisation of the town centre or a bypass. This had not been considered yet in the Local Plan process.

Some additional input had been provided by groups which had been unable to send a representative.

The comments would now be written up and circulated and those who attended would be invited to come back to the Town Council with any further comments.

Members wished to note for the record that there had been no consultation with the community prior to this event. One letter of thanks had already been received.

12. Arrangements for Christmas Lights Switch-on

Members noted that everything was in place for the switch-on of the Christmas lights display on the evening of Thursday, 25th November. Traders in the town would stay open late, there would be some entertainment and arrangements had been made for the sale of food and other items. The event would commence at 5.30pm with the switch-on at 6.30pm. The High Street would be closed between 3.30 and 9.00pm.

13. Consultation

Members noted the following consultation:

Bridgnorth Future Connectivity Plan – deadline for response to Shropshire Council by 21st November 2021.

It was RESOLVED to delegate responsibility for preparing a response to the Transport Working Group. A draft should be circulated to Councillors for consideration before submission.

14. Correspondence

Members noted the following items, which had been distributed via email between meetings:

- a. SALC information bulletins and other information
- b. NALC newsletters and other information
- c. Press releases from Shropshire Council
- d. Rural Bulletins from the Rural Services Network

15. Agenda Items for Next Town Council Meeting

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

2022/23 Budget, depending on the deadline for submission of the precept request to Shropshire Council

16. Date of next meeting

Members noted that the next meeting would be held at 7.00pm on Thursday, 2nd December 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.

17. Complaint

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

The meeting closed at 7.59 pm

Signed

Town Mayor

Date