

MUCH WENLOCK TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
 held at The Guildhall, Much Wenlock
 at 7 pm on Thursday, 3rd March 2022

Present: Cllr William Benbow, Cllr David Fenwick, Cllr Mike Grace, Cllr Wilfred Grainger, Cllr Marcus Themans, Cllr Daniel Thomas (in the chair), Cllr Christian Toon, Cllr Chris Tyler, Cllr Linda West, Cllr Duncan White

Town Clerk: Trudi Barrett

In attendance: Three members of the public, two PCSOs.

1. Chairman's Welcome

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

Good evening all, and welcome to tonight's Town Council meeting.

Firstly I'd like to congratulate Linda West, Christian Toon and William Benbow on their successful elections and welcome them to their first Council meeting.

When our current Council took up office in May, we promised to do more community engagement and consultation, and we certainly have. Inside all Wenlock Heralds and online, we're consulting on the Neighbourhood Plan and looking at Transport in the town. I urge all residents to take part and let their views be known. The deadline for replies is Saturday the 12th of March, so please don't delay.

This Council also takes its Civic role in the community very seriously. We're delighted to be planting some trees as part of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in our Cemetery. I thank the Wenlock Tree Forum for sourcing these trees for us and look forward to seeing them on the official map, which is being given to the Queen in June.

In a week, it's the date that every Mayor dreads. The Annual Town Meeting! It's an important time where this Council gives reports on its activities, including finance, planning and the Gaskell Recreation Ground. I will take questions from the floor, and refreshments will be served afterwards.

On Saturday, former Town Councillors Matt and Natalie Park opened a new shop, ChocTilly. A handmade chocolate shop and a café serving crepes and waffles make for an excellent addition to our fabulous High Street. ChocTilly takes over from a former clothing shop, which belonged to Carol Wilkinson. Carol has traded on our High Street for over 20 years, and on behalf of this Council, I would like to thank her for her time and wish her well in her retirement.

Speaking of retirement, Alastair Humphries retired this week after 36 years as an on-call firefighter. He's been an excellent Watch Manager, a post he'd held for over 20 years. Over this time Much Wenlock Fire Station has been redeveloped and been a lifeline for many people in the parish. The crew get called out around 120 times a year. On behalf of this Council, I'd like to thank him for his service and wish him well in his retirement.

Finally, I hope you'll have noticed that last Wednesday was Shropshire Day, a special day, the feast day of St Milburga, who was abbess of Wenlock Priory and needs no introduction here. My thanks go to Reverend Matthew Stafford and the Ryan family for marking the feast day with a special pie. I've sampled the pie, and it's delicious; Reverend Matthew, I'm sure, can confirm it's a Godly pie that tastes heavenly!

2. Apologies for Absence

It was RESOLVED to accept the following apology: Councillor John O'Dowd – unwell.

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:

Flooding has well and truly ravaged the county, but I'm pleased to say that Much Wenlock held up relatively well and didn't experience flooding on the scale that towns around the river Severn experienced.

I'm increasingly aware that Much Wenlock's roads and pavements are in a terrible state. This is not a reflection of myself or this Council's ability to influence getting potholes fixed, it is far more complicated than that with weather and resignations in the highways team.

You can help the situation by using the site 'Fix My Street' to report potholes and other problems, including street lights, fly tipping, etc. An extra £59 m has been added to Shropshire Council's highways budget in the next four years as the Council's financial strategy was approved at Full Council last month.

Last month's surgery wasn't as busy as January's but was worthwhile with two issues raised to me, Cllr White and PCSO Steven Breese. One issue raised was the signage at the allotments, and I've chased the contractor Kier to get the work done.

The next surgery is on Saturday 12th March at 10:30 am in the Museum, where I'll be joined by Cllr David Fenwick and our new Police officer, Andrew Boardman. Andrew comes from the police team in Kidderminster, so he has some broad knowledge of our area.

On a personal note, I'm sure the Chair will allow me: I had my first policy through Shropshire Council last week, and now all Shropshire Councillors will be entitled to paternity and maternity leave, eliminating a difficult barrier to young people's participation in local politics.

Also, I've been made Vice-Chair of the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee. Care takes up 85% of Shropshire's budget, so I'm keen that we can support officers and get value for money, making Shropshire better for those who live, work and visit here.

6. Police Report

Members noted the written report provided and responses to questions raised at the previous meeting. Councillors had been advised that details of the location and vehicles involved in road traffic collisions could be provided in the police reports. The local team regularly patrolled areas where there had been recent reports of anti-social behaviour as well as historic activity. 133 people had signed up to Neighbourhood Matters in the Broseley and Much Wenlock area, a higher than average take-up of the service in Shropshire.

PCSO Steven Breese advised that PC Andy Boardman would be joining the Broseley & Much Wenlock policing team on 11th March and would make himself known to the community. PCSO Breese talked through the written report. He asked for any intelligence on thefts or drugs to be passed to the police. He advised that he and PCSO Mal Goddard were able to undertake speed surveys within 30/40 mph speed limits.

In response to questions from Councillors, it was stated that the police were in contact with staff at the Priory with regard to anti-social behaviour on the car park. The policing team would follow up a report of items associated with drug taking being found. The number of safeguarding issues in the town was relatively low.

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 February 2022.**
- b. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to adopt the minutes of the Planning & Environment Committee meeting held on 11th January 2022.**
- c. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to adopt the minutes of HR Committee meeting held on 23rd 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. It was noted that contact had been made with the office of Philip Dunne MP but that his diary was very full at present and a date for a further meeting would be agreed in due course.

10. Nominations for Mayor 2022/2023

Councillor Fenwick proposed the nomination of Councillor Duncan White as Mayor. Councillor White had shown himself to be an outstanding Councillor, and had become involved in much of the Council's business and many projects.

The proposal was seconded by Councillor Themans.

It was unanimously RESOLVED to nominate Councillor Duncan White as Mayor for the civic year May 2022 to May 2023.

11. Nominations for Deputy Mayor 2022/2023

Councillor White proposed the nomination of Councillor David Fenwick as Deputy Mayor. Councillor Fenwick had gained experience since joining the Council, had indicated a willingness to serve in this role and would be a capable support for the Mayor.

The proposal was seconded by Councillor Toon.

It was unanimously RESOLVED to nominate Councillor David Fenwick as Deputy Mayor for the civic year May 2022 to May 2023.

12. Annual Town Meeting

Members noted the agenda and reviewed arrangements for the Annual Town Meeting to be held at 7.00pm on 10th March 2022 at the Priory Hall. Light refreshments (tea, coffee, biscuits) would be served at the end of the meeting. It was noted that this was a meeting of the electors of the parish, not a Town Council meeting.

13. Code of Conduct

- a. Members noted that Shropshire Council had adopted the new Local Government Association Code of Conduct and that it was recommended by Shropshire Council and NALC that town and parish councils also adopt the new code.
- b. Members considered the adoption of the new Code of Conduct for Much Wenlock Town Council. Concerns were expressed about the role of the Shropshire Council Monitoring Officer in dealing with complaints about Councillors.

It was RESOLVED to adopt the new Code of Conduct for Much Wenlock Town Council, following deletion of paragraph 5 of Appendix A, which was not relevant to the Town Council.

It was RESOLVED to review the Town Council's complaints procedure.

14. Appointments to Working Groups

- a. **It was RESOLVED to appoint Councillor Linda West to the Friends of the Cemetery Working Group.**
- b. **It was RESOLVED to appoint Councillors Benbow and Toon to the History Working Group.**
- c. **It was RESOLVED to appoint Councillors Toon, West and White to the Communications, Markets and Tourism Working Group.**
- d. **It was RESOLVED to appoint Councillor Benbow to the Transport Working Group.**
- e. **It was RESOLVED to appoint Councillors Benbow and Toon to the Property Working Group.**

15. Representative on Bridgnorth & Shifnal Area Committee of the Shropshire Association of Local Councils (SALC)

It was RESOLVED to appoint Councillor West to represent the Council on the Bridgnorth & Shifnal Area Committee of the Shropshire Association of Local Councils and to appoint Councillor White as reserve.

16. Shropshire Draft Local Plan (2016 - 2038) – Examination in Public

Members noted that the residents' survey on Planning and Traffic had been issued with the Wenlock Herald and was also available for completion online, with a deadline for responses of 12th March. Thanks were expressed to all those involved.

There was still no published date for the Examination in Public and exchanges were continuing between the Inspectors and Shropshire Council. The Town Council's case would be based upon the proposition agreed in the summer and submitted to Shropshire Council as part of the Regulation 19 consultation.

17. Community Governance Review Update

Members considered correspondence from Shropshire Council regarding the above. It was noted that boundary reviews were under way for Shropshire Council divisions and town and parish council areas. Housing development in some parts of Shropshire had led to inequalities in numbers represented by Shropshire Councillors. A review of town and parish council boundaries had not been undertaken since 2009.

It was RESOLVED that Councillors were content with the current town boundary and did not wish to request any changes.

The Clerk was also asked to clarify with Shropshire Council the rationale for the current Place Plan boundaries.

18. Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust

Members considered correspondence from the Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust concerning community engagement. **It was RESOLVED to highlight the opportunities for public engagement and links provided to members of the public.**

19. 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
- e. Details of webinar on the 'Shropshire Good Food Charter' on 21st February 2022
- f. 'Local Health Champions want to hear about NHS psychological services' 8th February 2022
- g. West Mercia Police Fraud and Scam Bulletin February 2022
- h. Zero Carbon Shropshire newsletter February 2022
- i. Healthwatch Press Release: Children & young People's mental health in Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin
- j. Friendly Bus newsletter March 2022
- k. Notice of road closures at Bourton and Brockton for rock face work.

20. Agenda items for next Town Council meeting

Members are invited to suggest items for inclusion on the agenda for the next meeting.

- New 'Climate Champion' for the Council

21. Date of next meeting

Members noted that the next meeting would be held at 7.00pm on 7th April 2022 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.

22. Property Matters

- a. Members noted an update from the Property Working Group.

2 Burgage Way

In line with the decision taken at the meeting of the Finance & Asset Management Committee on 20th January 2022, notice to quit had been given to the tenant of 2 Burgage Way, expiring at the end of May, to enable the sale of the property. The sale was intended to raise funds for the renovation of other Council property, in particular, the Guildhall.

It was RESOLVED to contact the Council's solicitor, Lanyon Bowdler, with regard to the conveyancing and change needed to the title deed.

10 High Street

So far, the Clerk had been unable to obtain a specification for electrical work required to the former bank premises but had been provided with details of another possible contractor who might undertake this task. A group interested in the use of the bank premises would be presenting their proposal at the next meeting of the Finance & Asset Management Committee.

Guildhall

Members of the Property Working Group had met with one fund finding specialist and meetings were being arranged with two further consultancies.

- b. **It was RESOLVED to defer consideration of the engagement of a professional fund raiser for the renovation of the Guildhall pending receipt of further quotations.**

The meeting closed at 8.40pm

Signed

Date

Town Mayor