

# MUCH WENLOCK TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the  
**TOWN COUNCIL MEETING**  
held at The Guildhall, Much Wenlock  
at 7 pm on Thursday, 6<sup>th</sup> October 2022

**Present:** Councillors William Benbow, Susan Crooke-Williams, David Fenwick, John O'Dowd, Marcus Themans, Daniel Thomas, Christian Toon, Chris Tyler, Linda West, Duncan White (in the chair)

**In attendance:** Diane Barlow – RFO, Trudi Barrett – Town Clerk (remotely)

Two members of the public, PCSO Mal Goddard

One member of the public attending the meeting remotely

## 1. Chairman's Welcome

The Mayor presented the following report:

Welcome back to business after our summer break from Full Council meetings. Work has carried on during this time although we have also had our business paused during the period of mourning following the sad passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. We wrote on behalf of the Council to offer our condolences to the Royal Family.

I had the honour of attending the County Proclamation of King Charles III at Shrewsbury and was then handed an official scroll to return to our town and make our local proclamation. This is now on display in the Guildhall and I would like to thank everyone who helped make the arrangements during that difficult period.

Since the last meeting the RFO and I had a meeting with a representative of the church to discuss the ongoing problem caused by pigeons.

We had our first meeting with Elanor Hazlehurst of Greenwood Projects, which is the company we have selected to work with us to raise funds for the work needed on the beautiful Guildhall building. This is a long-term project and we are at the first stage, but we will be able to give updates as we travel down this road of recovery for the building, which has been overlooked for some years. The building needs a considerable amount of work including the installation of a lift to improve access and we are glad to have the help and expertise of Greenwood Projects on this journey.

In recent times there have been some worrying incidents around the town and we have been working with the local police on the issues. I have had a meeting to discuss this with Sgt Kate Oen. It has raised the issue of CCTV coverage around the town and together with Sgt Oen we will be doing research into a possible upgrade to our system. We visited Cleobury Mortimer together to see their new system, for which they had funding to install. Other members of the Council and staff will also be visiting Shifnal to view their system.

I, like many, have become very frustrated with the length of time Shropshire Council takes via "Fix My Street" to resolve issues around our town, so I recently took matters into my own hands and cleared the vegetation blocking the path in Station Road, trimmed the tree which was hiding the sign to the St Mary's St car park, and trimmed the enormous weeds concealing the town welcome sign under the old railway bridge. I would like to form a group of volunteers to do jobs around our town and keep it looking attractive and welcoming, as well as efficient. I have the support of the Council's Planning & Environment Committee and will be advertising for volunteers in the near future.

On a positive note we held our third artisan street market with "Made in Shropshire". This was well attended and brought a lot of new visitors to our town. The visitor numbers and sales at the Guildhall more than tripled on the day with visitors from across the Midlands attending. We will sit down with "Made in Shropshire" and discuss markets for next year and I hope that we can extend this year's successful markets.

We are already making plans to arrange our town Christmas lights switch on after last year's successful event. This year it will be on Thursday, 24th November. Look out for further details over the coming weeks.

This Saturday at 10am at the Priory Hall there is a coffee morning to raise funds for the local First Responders. There will be demonstrations of how to use the newly installed defibrillator as well as a discussion about Safeguarding for those who may be interested.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome our new Councillor, Mrs Susan Crooke-Williams, to the Town Council following the recent election.

## 2. Apologies for Absence

Cllr Wilfred Grainger – working away

## 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. Public Session

There had been no requests to speak.

## 6. Policing

- a. Members noted with thanks the written police reports provided. It was reported that PCSO Heath had left the police force and it was not known when a replacement officer would be appointed. PCSO Mal Goddard provided a verbal overview of recent activity:
  - Garden thefts had reduced
  - Speed checks had been carried out in the town although the results were not fully representative of usual driving behaviour as the police officers were very obvious in high-visibility vests.
  - Two sessions had been held for the 6<sup>th</sup> Form at William Brookes School covering knife crime, drugs and the prevention of radicalisation.
  - PCSO Goddard was questioned about a taser found on Wenlock Edge. He advised that it was possible to purchase tasers online and it appeared that this one had been acquired and then thrown away. There had been no reports of taser use in the area.
  - A data box would be set up on Bourton Road in the coming weeks to measure traffic speeds. It was noted that the box would not provide data on the number of heavy goods vehicles.
- b. Members considered devising a procedure for making relevant CCTV footage available to the police should an incident occur. Recent incidents had shown an increasing need for the provision of CCTV footage. **It was RESOLVED that the Mayor and Clerk should draft a procedure for consideration.**
- c. It was noted that the Council's CCTV system was now outdated and much higher specification systems were available. The Mayor had recently visited Cleobury Mortimer to view the CCTV system there, which was extensive and of high quality, and a visit to Shifnal had also been arranged. An application could be made to the Police and Crime Commissioner's office for grant funding to upgrade or replace the Council CCTV system. **It was RESOLVED to carry out further research and explore options for upgrading or replacing the Council's current CCTV system.** Councillor Toon offered to work with the Mayor on this project.
- d. Members were disappointed to note that the Community Speed Watch Co-ordinator had determined that it would not be possible to undertake community speed watch activities on Bourton Road as there was no safe, public location from which the group could operate. It was not permitted to use private driveways for this monitoring. It was noted that the local policing team would continue to conduct speed surveys with the laser speed gun when time allowed and the planned installation of the data box would provide up to date information on vehicle speeds on the road.
- e. Members noted a letter from Police Superintendent Stuart Bill regarding a relaunch of the Local Policing Community Charter and local policing matters.
- f. Members reviewed the policing priorities for the town identified by the Council in March 2022. **It was RESOLVED to retain the same priorities for the next six months: theft (outbuildings), drugs and speeding.**

## 7. Bridgnorth Food Bank (deferred from 8<sup>th</sup> September)

Members noted that Ms Liz Bird, Bridgnorth Food Bank Manager, had been scheduled to speak to the Council about the work of the Food Bank at the meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> September but was unavailable to do so at this meeting. The presentation would be made at the next full Council meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2022.

## 8. Shropshire Council Report

Shropshire Councillor, Daniel Thomas, presented the following report:

### **Hunters Gate Flooding**

Shropshire Highways recently undertook investigation works into the connectivity of the highway drainage network in Hunters Gate. Following this investigation, some minor works were undertaken to improve the functionality of the highway drainage network around the properties at risk of flooding. I attended the investigation and was delighted to see prompt action to improve the drainage of that corner of the field. Although this work will not entirely address the risk of flooding at Hunters Gate, it will allow the system to drain more effectively during smaller storm events.

In addition to these works, Shropshire Council has issued a report on Hunters Gate's flooding, which will set out opportunities for further flood resilience projects. The Planning Committee had a first look at this on Tuesday night. This report explores the opportunities for more longer-term flood alleviation projects at Hunters Gate and provides an analysis of each option's viability. Once issued, Shropshire Council and I will work with the Town Council and Flood Action Group to decide the future course of action.

### **Foot/highways Improvements**

I've successfully pushed for action across our town with good footway improvements on holes in Queen Street and Barrow Street, behind Willow House. The hedges across Racecourse Lane have also had a significant cutting, vastly increasing visibility for drivers and pedestrians.

I'm delighted to report that the much-needed repairs to the walkway on Victoria Road have been completed, making safe the walkway for years to come. Last week Sheinton street was closed for repairs to two gully. The investigation found that both had been damaged by Cadent when doing Gasworks; one gully has been repaired, but the other needs action by Cadent, which could take 6-12 weeks to take place.

### **Diversion Through Much Wenlock**

Ironbridge Road in Broseley will be closed from the 24<sup>th</sup> of October until the 16<sup>th</sup> of December. This is out of my area, but the diversion goes through Barrow, onto Merrywell lane and then into the Gaskell Corner because it has nowhere else to go. Ironbridge Road desperately needs this stabilisation work, but please allow extra time for journeys.

### **Cemetery Signage**

This month, more signage will be out around the Bridgnorth Road Cemetery and Allotment site, which is much needed and will help make it safer for people visiting graves.

### **Shadwell Quarry**

I share concerns with many in the community about the recent development activity at Shadwell Quarry and met with the head of planning at Shropshire Council to discuss this; I am reassured that they are responding to local concerns.

### **Surgery**

The next Council surgery will be held this coming Saturday, 15<sup>th</sup> October, between 10.30 am and 12 noon at the museum. No appointment is necessary. I'll be joined by Cllr Linda West and a representative from the Police.

Councillor West expressed concern that following the works to the high walkway on Victoria Road, an amount of loose cement remained that presented a hazard. Councillor Thomas undertook to check this.

## **9. By-Election for Councillor**

- a. Members noted that the election to fill the vacancy for a Town Councillor had been held on 8<sup>th</sup> September.
- b. The successful candidate, Mrs Susan Crooke-Williams, was welcomed to the Town Council.

## **10. Minutes**

- a. **It was RESOLVED to approve and adopt the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> July 2022.**
- b. **It was RESOLVED to approve and adopt the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2022.**
- c. **It was RESOLVED to adopt the minutes of the Planning & Environment Committee meetings held on 7<sup>th</sup> June, 5<sup>th</sup> July 2022 and 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2022.**
- d. It was noted that members of the Finance & Asset Management Committee had resolved to correct an error in the minutes of the meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2022 and **it was RESOLVED to adopt the amended minutes of the Finance & Asset Management Committee meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2022.**
- e. **It was RESOLVED to adopt the minutes of the Finance & Asset Management Committee meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2022 and 26<sup>th</sup> July 2022.**

## **11. 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 drew attention to the Cost of Living briefing she had attended at which useful information had been shared relating to sources of help and advice for those experiencing financial or other challenges. The Clerk would share this information with Councillors.

## 12. External Audit

- a. Members noted that the External Auditor's Report and Certificate had been received for the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2021/22 and that in the opinion of the auditor, the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the AGAR 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 RFO and Clerk.
- b. Members noted that the Notice of Conclusion of Audit had been posted, as required.
- c. Members considered the option to opt out of the Smaller Authorities Audit Appointments central external auditor appointment arrangements. **It was RESOLVED to remain within the current framework and not to opt out.**

## 13. Development of a Strategic Plan

It was noted that the Planning & Environment and Finance & Asset Management Committees had considered their priorities. Results would be collated by the Clerk for further consideration by Councillors. It was stressed that the plan should be presented in a clear and concise manner. It was suggested that an appendix could be included setting out the respective responsibilities of the Town Council and Shropshire Council.

## 14. The Guildhall – Meeting with Greenwood Projects

- a. Members noted a verbal report from the meeting with Greenwood Projects regarding the renovation and future use of the Guildhall. The meeting had outlined the way forward and likely timescales. It was noted that this was a long-term project which could take up to five years to complete. Greenwood Projects would be seeking funding for the project on behalf of the Council and had recommended an application to the Architectural Heritage Fund for a feasibility study.  
**It was RESOLVED to approve the submission of a grant application to the Architectural Heritage Fund.**
- b. **It was RESOLVED to delegate responsibility to the Finance & Asset Management Committee to oversee and manage the Guildhall project on a day-to-day basis with regular reports back to full Council and significant decisions being determined by full Council.**

## 15. Christmas Lights Display

An initial meeting had been held to discuss plans for the Christmas Lights Switch-On at 6.30pm on the evening of Thursday, 24<sup>th</sup> November. A road closure had been arranged from earlier in the evening. Councillors were urged to act as stewards and help with the event on the night.

Expected costs were around £80 for the PA/music and just over £100 for two costumed characters. As the Town Celebrations budget had already been spent, **it was RESOLVED to provide funding for the event from the contingency budget.**

## 16. Town Council Website

Councillor Toon advised that a proposal for the Council's website was still being prepared and would be presented to Council as soon as completed.

## 17. Document Retention Policy

**It was RESOLVED to approve amendments to the Document Retention Policy and Document Retention Schedule and to approve the Disposal and Destruction Procedure for Town Council Records. The schedule should be updated to reflect the responsibilities set out in the Disposal and Destruction Procedure.**

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

Members noted a report from members of the Shropshire Local Plan Review Working Group on the Examination in Public. The Inspectors had shown concern about the Duty of Co-operation. A further meeting would be held with Shropshire Council in mid-January to discuss this. Stage 2 of the Examination, regarding site assessment, had originally been scheduled for October but was now likely to be carried out next year. A new date was awaited.

## 19. Ironbridge Power Station

- a. Members noted that Shropshire Council (on 16.09.22) and Telford & Wrekin Council (on 22.09.22) had issued outline planning permission for redevelopment of the former Ironbridge Power Station site (applications 19/05560/OUT and TWC/2019/1046).
- b. It was noted that the above represented another step towards Much Wenlock being allocated funding for a traffic survey and feasibility study. Councillor Thomas would check progress.

## 20. Communication with Shropshire Council

A recommendation had been made by the Planning & Environment Committee to consider writing to Andy Begley, Chief Executive of Shropshire Council, regarding concerns about communication with Shropshire Council officers. It was noted that some improvement in communication had been seen since this recommendation. Shropshire Council had expanded the highways team and a new officer had been appointed who was responsible for day-to-day highways matters in the town. Much of the previous frustration had arisen from lack of communication from the highways department. It was noted that there was a difference between lack of communication and lack of action. There were ongoing concerns about the performance of external contractors.

**It was RESOLVED to write to Andy Begley, Chief Executive of Shropshire Council, expressing the Town Council's dissatisfaction with the speed of response to works within the town requested of WSP.**

## 21. 'Plastic Free Wenlock'

It was noted that Much Wenlock had been awarded 'Plastic Free Community' Status by marine conservation charity, Surfers Against Sewage. Members expressed their thanks to Mrs Jacky Walter, the lead on this project, who had worked extremely hard to achieve the award, the first in Shropshire. The Mayor advised that he and Mrs Walter had recently attended an afternoon tea organised by the High Sheriff to recognise local volunteers. **It was RESOLVED to send a letter of thanks to Mrs Walter and to invite her to attend a meeting of the Planning & Environment Committee to provide an update on 'Plastic Free Wenlock'.**

## 22. Joint Working on Climate Change and Green Initiatives

Members considered an approach from Broseley Town Council to explore joint working on climate change and green initiatives. The Mayor had held an initial discussion with the Broseley Mayor, Councillor Ian West, to discuss this proposal. **It was RESOLVED to accept the invitation and to work together with Broseley Town Council on climate change and green initiatives.**

## 23. Cost of Living Crisis

- a. The Council had been asked about the provision of a 'warm hub' in the town, a warm space where people could spend time during the day/evening if they were struggling to heat their homes. Enquiries had been made locally. 10 High Street was still in need of renovation and not in a useable condition. The church was unable to offer this facility at present due to a significant problem with their heating system. Star Housing had been approached about use of the community room at High Causeway, but the room was already used for other purposes. However, Star Housing had agreed to consider the matter further. Shropshire Council had announced that all libraries could be used as warm hubs, which included Much Wenlock Library, and Much Wenlock Museum was also listed. This was welcome but it was noted that Much Wenlock library was very small and both the library and museum had limited opening hours.
- b. Members considered the provision of a 'food donations cupboard' for the town. Members of the public could make donations of spare food, for example from an allotment, for those in need to help themselves. Concerns were expressed about liability, food hygiene and control. It was noted that the food bank already operated in the town and this was encouraged and supported by the Town Council.
- c. Members considered how the Council might save energy this winter. It was suggested that Council meetings could be held by Zoom to reduce energy consumption in public buildings, however, it was currently not legal to hold remote Council meetings. One option might be to introduce part-night lighting for some of the Town Council's street lights. It was noted that the Council was already replacing many of its street lights with energy efficient LED lighting. Energy costs could be seen in the Council's income and expenditure accounts. **It was RESOLVED that the Mayor should speak to Police Sergeant Oen for guidance on switching off street lights and seek information about practices in other towns.**

## 24. HSBC – community pop-up advice sessions

Members considered an approach from HSBC Bank about holding pop-up sessions in Much Wenlock offering awareness raising about such matters as online fraud and scams, as well as general banking support. **It was RESOLVED to accept the offer from HSBC and to make arrangements for sessions in the town.**

It was suggested that other banks could also be contacted to see whether they would be interested in providing a similar service.

## 25. Shropshire Association of Local Councils (SALC) – AGM

- a. Members noted that the SALC AGM would be held on Friday, 11<sup>th</sup> November at 6.00pm via Zoom.
- b. Members noted that, as a member Council, Much Wenlock was entitled to send two voting representatives to the AGM. **It was RESOLVED that the Mayor would attend the AGM on behalf of the Council.**

## 26. Change of name for Much Wenlock Forester Charitable Trust

Members noted that the name of the Much Wenlock Forester Charitable Trust had changed to the Wenlock Forester Trust, with effect from 9<sup>th</sup> August 2022.

## 27. Consultation

Members considered a response to the following consultations:

- a. Shropshire Council's Draft Empty Homes Strategy 2022-2025, consultation period 22<sup>nd</sup> July to 18<sup>th</sup> September 2022. This item had been deferred from 8<sup>th</sup> September. **It was RESOLVED to make no response as the deadline had passed.**
- b. Shropshire Council's Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment 2022, consultation period 2<sup>nd</sup> August to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022. This item had been deferred from 8<sup>th</sup> September. **It was RESOLVED to make no response as the deadline had passed.**
- c. Shropshire Healthy Weight Strategy, consultation period 5<sup>th</sup> September to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2022. **It was RESOLVED to make no response.**

## 28. Correspondence

Members noted the following items, which had been emailed to Members:

- 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. Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership Newsletter July 2022
- f. Invitation to the Shropshire Hills AONB Summer Forum & Tour on 26<sup>th</sup> July 2022
- g. Message from Shropshire Council regarding the findings from the Independent Inquiry on Telford Child Sexual Exploitation (IITCSE)
- h. July Update from the Public Participation Team of the Shrewsbury and Telford Hospitals NHS Trust
- i. Zero Carbon Shropshire Green News July and August 2022
- j. Minutes of the Helicopter Noise Liaison Group meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2022.
- k. Press release from NHS Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin, 28<sup>th</sup> July 2022: Plans progress for the Shrewsbury Health and Wellbeing Hub as site now identified
- l. STAR Housing July 2022 Bulletin
- m. Press release from Healthwatch Shropshire, 1<sup>st</sup> August 2022: Healthwatch are hearing mixed feedback about emergency care in Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin
- n. Notice of Telford Samaritans AGM on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2022.
- o. Shropshire Council Leader's Update summer 2022.
- p. Shrewsbury & Telford Hospital NHS Trust Public Participation August Update
- q. Police Safer Neighbourhood Team Newsletter August 2022
- r. Shropshire Lieutenancy Newsletter Issue 5
- s. Notification of Shropshire Goes Green event at Shrewsbury Town Football Club on 25<sup>th</sup> September 2022.
- t. Zero Carbon Shropshire Green News Sept 2022
- u. Friendly Bus Newsletter October 2022

## 29. Agenda items for next Town Council meeting

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

- Transport questionnaire – feedback from results and further action

## 30. Date of next meeting

Members noted that the next meeting would be held on Thursday, 3rd November 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.

**It was RESOLVED to suspend standing orders to allow the meeting to continue past 9pm.**

## 31. Christmas Lights Display

- a. It was noted that quotations for new column lights for the Gaskell corner had been considered by the Finance & Asset Management Committee at the meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> September due to the urgency of a decision. It had been resolved to purchase four new column lights from LITE, and responsibility had been delegated to staff to make a choice.

- b. It was noted that quotations for the installation of the town's Christmas Lights had been considered by the Finance & Asset Management Committee at the meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> September due to the urgency of a decision. It had been resolved to contract Potters Electrical and arrangements were in progress.

**31. 2 Burgage Way**

Members noted an update on the sale of the property. The Clerk was asked to press the Council's solicitor for progress.

**32. Legal Matter**

Members were advised of recent correspondence.

**33. Complaint**

Councillor Thomas withdrew from the meeting.

**It was RESOLVED that no further action should be taken with regard to the complaint.**

The meeting closed at 9.20 pm

Signed .....

Town Mayor

Date .....