

MUCH WENLOCK TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
held at The Guildhall, Much Wenlock
at 7 pm on Thursday, 2nd February 2023

Present: Councillors William Benbow, Susan Crooke-Williams, David Fenwick, Wilfred Grainger, John O’Dowd, Marcus Themans, Daniel Thomas, Christian Toon, Duncan White (in the chair).

In attendance: Trudi Barrett – Town Clerk, two members of the public in person and three remotely, including Cllr Tyler.

1. Chairman’s Welcome

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

“Things are now back in full swing. Our work towards obtaining funding for the Guildhall is well underway and after getting the first application through successfully we are now at the next stage to apply for funding for a feasibility study.

I attended the recent surgery at the Museum with Councillor Dan Thomas and PC Andy Boardman.

After a reshuffle of Council personnel, Councillor West has joined the Gaskell Management Committee as a Council representative.

I attended a recent SALC Chairs’ meeting where I raised the issue of the proposal by Shropshire Council to charge for road closures. There was considerable opposition to the proposal and the matter is going to be raised by the Chair of SALC in upcoming meetings. This matter is on tonight’s agenda for discussion.

The Clerk and I met with members of the Windmill Trust in an effort to move forward the proposal to designate Windmill Hill as a Local Nature Reserve - again this is on the agenda.

This morning I attended with others the briefing in respect of the “Ironbridge Passenger Transport Study” for the new development on the “old power station site”. This includes the development of rail links for the site and surrounding area and will include other public transport. More information will be released in the coming months.

On the horizon are St Milburga Day on 23rd February and, of course, the Coronation in May. We will discuss arrangements for the Coronation weekend later on the agenda.”

2. Apologies for Absence

Councillors Chris Tyler and Linda West – unwell. Councillor Benbow for late arrival.

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

The local policing team had sent apologies. Members noted with thanks the written police report provided and were pleased to read about some of the local team’s recent successes.

7. Shropshire Council Report

Shropshire Councillor, Daniel Thomas, presented the following report:

“Parking Proposals: on 11th January, I was joined by Cllr Chris Tyler, representing the Town Council, in a meeting with WSP to discuss the latest parking map. We made several alterations, including those from the Town Council, which included Station Road, Sytche Close and Farley Road. WSP agreed to amend the map and re-issue it within two weeks, and they achieved this! I’ve sent it to all Town Councillors, and from here, we will start the preparations for the public consultation.

Traffic Survey: on 17th January, another meeting about the Gaskell Corner Feasibility Study took place. Local resident and retired transport planner Paul Hanafin and Cllr Chris Tyler joined me. The meetings are proceeding well, and an excellent working relationship is being established between WSP, Shropshire Council and ourselves. Paul's expert input is being appreciated and respected by the WSP members. The highlighting of rat-running issues features highly in the considerations.

As mentioned previously, WSP agreed that the feasibility study will consider all options "from doing nothing, signing and lining; up to signalised option and a bypass". With our urging, the feasibility study is being expanded to look wider. As Councillors know, you cannot look at the corner in isolation, so modelling is being done on King Street, Sheinton Street and others to survey the rat running. A further meeting is to take place in February.

Benthall Grange: like many residents of Much Wenlock and beyond, I have concerns regarding Harworth calling the 1,000-home development at Buildwas Power Station 'Benthall Grange'; there's already a house called Benthall Grange in Benthall, it's not fair on them, not to mention people getting lost looking for Benthall Hall. But ultimately Benthall is its own place with its own history. Harworth could choose a different name for their new development representing it as a new town. I met with Harworth's Development Director to raise my concerns and look for a better name; I was joined by Shropshire Councillor for Severn Valley, Cllr Claire Wild, who echoed my concerns.

Today I attended a virtual meeting looking at the transport for the Buildwas Power Station development with other Town Councillors, where there was a focus on using the rail line to get into Telford.

Local Plan: on 17th January there was an extra public hearing looking at whether Shropshire Council met their requirements regarding the Duty To Cooperate, particularly with the Black Country authorities. We were advised we would get a letter within two weeks if the examination was not permitted to proceed to the second stage, but we haven't had one yet. One presumes, therefore, that the Examination will now look at sites in detail.

Barrow Street & Back Lane: I'm delighted with the recent works on Barrow Street which have repaired the potholes in the road and pavement. Similarly, since our last meeting, Back Lane has also undergone repair.

Electric Car Charging Points: I'm pleased to see that work has started on the 12 new electric car charging points, six on Falcons Court and six on St Mary's public car parks. It should be completed and opened soon, helping residents and tourists visit our town.

Surgery: the next Council surgery will be held on Saturday, 11th February, between 10.30 am and 12 noon at the museum. No appointment is necessary. I'll be joined by Town Cllr Christian Toon and a representative from the Police."

8. Minutes

- a. **It was RESOLVED to approve and adopt the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 5th January 2023.**
- b. Clarification was provided for minute 11 of the Planning & Environment Committee minutes from the meeting on 29th November 2022: it was expected that Shropshire Council would invite the Town Council to review the Neighbourhood Plan following approval of the Local Plan. However, this would not prevent the Town Council from commencing a review of the Neighbourhood Plan at an earlier date, should Councillors agree to do so.

It was RESOLVED to adopt the minutes of the Planning & Environment Committee meeting held on 29th November 2022.
- c. **It was RESOLVED to adopt the minutes of the Finance & Asset Management Committee meeting held on 22nd November 2022.**

Cllr Benbow joined the meeting.

9. Town Clerk's Report

Members noted the written and verbal report from the Town Clerk on outstanding matters and action taken since the last Council meeting. The Clerk reported that a proposal for a new CCTV system had now been received and this would be circulated to all Councillors for information.

10. Interim Internal Audit Report

Members noted the Interim Internal Audit Report from the inspection carried out on 16th January 2023. All was in order and no action was required. Thanks were expressed to the RFO and Clerk.

11. The Guildhall Renovation

- a. It was noted that a meeting had been held with Greenwood Projects on 10th January 2023 to discuss the Architectural Heritage Fund grant and next steps.

- b. **It was RESOLVED to approve submission of a grant application to the National Heritage Lottery Fund for further funding towards the feasibility study for the Guildhall.**

12. Annual Town Meeting – 9th March 2023

Members noted that the Annual Town Meeting would be held on Thursday, 9th March at the Priory Hall.

It was RESOLVED that the meeting should follow a similar format to the previous year and be publicised widely.

13. Windmill Hill – Designation as Local Nature Reserve

- a. **It was RESOLVED to request that Shropshire Council delegate power to Much Wenlock Town Council to enable the designation of Windmill Hill as a Local Nature Reserve.**
- b. **It was RESOLVED to agree to the principle of a Local Nature Reserve Agreement between Much Wenlock Windmill Trust, Wenlock Estates and Much Wenlock Town Council.**
- c. **It was RESOLVED that Tony Jones and John Box, Trustees of Much Wenlock Windmill Trust, be given authority to begin the process of drafting the Nature Reserve Agreement, for discussion between Wenlock Estates, Much Wenlock Town Council and Much Wenlock Windmill Trust.**
- d. **It was RESOLVED to approve the location plan drawn up by Shropshire Wildlife Trust to support the designation of Windmill Hill as a Local Nature Reserve.**

14. New Electric Vehicle Charging Points in Much Wenlock

Members noted that Shropshire Council were installing six new electric vehicle charging points in St Mary's Lane car park and six new charging points in Falcon's Court car park and that the parking spaces would be restricted to use by electric charging vehicles only.

15. Shropshire Council Proposals to Charge for Road Closures

Members considered draft proposals from Shropshire Council to charge for road closure applications. It was noted that the proposals had been withdrawn from the Shropshire Council Cabinet meeting on 18th January. It was understood that Shropshire Council's Place Scrutiny Committee had recommended charging for commercial events only, not for community events.

Town Councillors were concerned about the effect that the introduction of charges, whether for commercial or community events, would have on the vitality and economic performance of small towns. It was noted that there was little Shropshire Council administration involved in straightforward road closures and that the Town Council undertook much of the work: printing and displaying the required signs and putting out the barriers.

It was RESOLVED to write to the portfolio holder for Highways and Regulatory Services, Councillor Richard Marshall, to express Much Wenlock Town Council's strong objection to the introduction of any charges for road closures.

16. Draft Shropshire Local Plan Review 2016 - 2038

An extra public hearing had been held on 17th January 2023 concerning the Duty To Cooperate, particularly with the Black Country associations. The subsequent report from the Inspectors was still awaited.

17. Coronation of His Majesty King Charles III

- a. It was noted that the coronation of His Majesty King Charles III would take place on Saturday, 6th May 2023 and that an additional bank holiday had been proclaimed on Monday, 8th May 2023 in honour of the event.
- b. Members considered how the coronation might be marked in Much Wenlock. The PCC of Holy Trinity Church had given permission for the Church green to be used for celebrations and a community picnic on the green was suggested for Sunday, 7th May.

It was RESOLVED to set up a working group to consider how the coronation might be celebrated in Much Wenlock and to report back to the Council. Councillors Susan Croke-Williams, David Fenwick, Wilfred Grainger, Daniel Thomas, Christian Toon and Duncan White volunteered to join the working group.

It was noted that members of the Much Wenlock Women's Institute were keen to be involved and had offered to help with arrangements.

18. Voters in England to show ID at Polling Stations from May 2023

It was noted that from 4th May 2023 voters in England would need to show photo ID to vote at polling stations in some elections.

19. Consultation

Members considered a response to the following consultation:

- a. Shropshire Council revision to Extremely Hazardous Routes Policy (home-to-school transport policy on unsafe walking routes for school children) – deadline for response 10th February 2023.

It was RESOLVED to respond to the consultation, making no comment on the policy but raising concerns about specific routes in town: no current 20 mph speed limit on Racecourse Lane outside the primary school, the need for a crossing point on the A458 near to the primary school, the lack of a footpath in part of Bourton Road, the difficulty in crossing the Gaskell junction, the risk from silent electric vehicles and the issue of vehicles cutting through town centre roads, in particular Sheinton Street.

- b. Shropshire Council Draft Sustainable Affordable Warmth Strategy – deadline for response 5th March 2023.
It was RESOLVED to make no response.
- c. Draft Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site Supplementary Planning Document – deadline for response 20th February 2023. **It was RESOLVED to make no response.**

20. Correspondence

Members noted the following items, which had been circulated via email:

- 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. Information from the RSN Rural Market Town Group
- f. Police Neighbourhood Matters alerts
- g. Notification of Shrewsbury & Telford Hospital NHS Trust news and events
- h. South Shropshire Climate Action Newsletter January 2023
- i. TREES (Together Reducing & Ending Exploitation in Shropshire) Newsletter Winter 2023
- j. Letter from Shropshire Council regarding 'Warp It' scheme and other climate action information
- k. Shropshire Council Leader's Update – January 2023 Levelling Up Funding
- l. Zero Carbon Shropshire newsletter – February 2023 Green News
- m. Friendly Bus Newsletter – February 2023
- n. Shrewsbury & Telford Hospital NHS Trust – January update
- o. Safer Neighbourhood Team Newsletter – February 2023
- p. Shropshire Rural Housing Association Board & Committee Recruitment Campaign

21. Agenda items for next Town Council meeting

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

22. Date of next meeting

Members noted that the next meeting would be held at 7.00pm on Thursday, 2nd March 2023 at the Guildhall.

Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960

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

23. 2 Burgage Way

Members noted the Sale Report prepared by the Council's solicitor relating to the sale of 2 Burgage Way.

It was RESOLVED to approve and sign the lease between the Town Council and the buyer and the accompanying lease plan.

It was RESOLVED to approve and sign the Contract for the sale of 2 Burgage Way.

It was RESOLVED to complete and sign the Payment Instruction Form for the proceeds from the sale of 2 Burgage Way.

24. Gaskell Recreation Ground

It was RESOLVED to approve the proposals concerning the Gaskell Recreation Ground contained within the confidential report submitted to the meeting

The meeting closed at 8.25 pm.

Signed Town Mayor Date