

MUCH WENLOCK TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
held at The Guildhall, Much Wenlock
at 7 pm on Thursday, 7th September 2023

Present: Councillors Susan Crooke-Williams, David Fenwick (in the chair), Wilfred Grainger, Marcus Themans, Daniel Thomas, Christian Toon, Linda West, Duncan White.

In attendance: Trudi Barrett – Town Clerk, three members of the public in person and one remotely

1. Mayor's Welcome

"Welcome back everyone after our summer break, and despite us not having met for two months a surprising amount has taken place in our town.

There was another successful Wenlock Olympian Games held, as usual, on the Gaskell Ground, and my thanks go to Marcus Themans as Deputy Mayor for handing out the medals in my absence.

Subsequent to the flood in the town, there were two walk around meetings with John Bellis, as flood prevention officer from Shropshire Council, along with representatives from Severn Trent and The Environment Agency. We have had a report from John Bellis and already three drainage gullies have been fitted in Sheinton Street and Queen Street. This important issue is on the agenda for discussion later.

Our County Councillor and myself visited the Callaughtons Ash 2 site where more properties are being built for social, affordable housing. The site is scheduled for completion in March next year and allocation will be on the usual points system. There will be a range of one, two and three bedroom houses. There will also be a rainwater attenuation system in place, which seems to be functioning satisfactorily at present.

With regard to the review of the Neighbourhood Plan, the Planning & Environment Committee has selected a professional advisor to head up the team of interested members of the community to make up the steering group. We have chosen Alison Eardley, who is a sole practitioner, but with people she can call upon locally.

Personally, I attended a Zoom meeting of county chairmen and mayors, and helped at the cemetery with some clearing and general gardening in the middle of a litter picking morning.

The town's well known author, Jo Jackson, has had her latest book, 'They Speak of Night', published, so good luck to her.

Sunday, 24th September is the date for the morning Civic Service in Holy Trinity Church in Much Wenlock. Please attend if you can.

And finally, good luck also to Councillor Wilf Grainger and his brother-in-law with their very worthwhile men's mental health group.

2. Apologies for Absence

Councillors John O'Dowd and Chris Tyler – holiday, Councillor Benbow – working.

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.

Cllr Daniel Thomas declared a pecuniary interest in agenda item 17

4. Dispensations

None requested.

5. Public Session

There had been no requests to speak.

6. Policing

- a. Members noted the written report provided.
- b. Members reviewed the Council's policing priorities. **It was RESOLVED to maintain the current policing priorities: theft from outbuildings, drugs and speeding.**

7. Shropshire Council Report

Shropshire Councillor, Daniel Thomas, presented the following report:

Flood Works: works have taken place to restore and improve the Eco Kerb drains on Sheinton Street; these are an important line of defence against stormwater flooding, and it's taken some lobbying to get them reinstated successfully. They're also improved as they go directly into the town culvert now. Whilst this work was being undertaken, Shropshire Council replaced some manhole covers with grid drains on Queen Street, which will mean more water is taken away, improving protection for Queen Street and Sheinton Street from stormwater.

Traffic and Parking Drop-In Session: Shropshire Council's Traffic Engineer, Nick Newton and I will hold a drop-in session on Saturday, 23rd September, in the town square, where we will ask residents for their opinions on the proposed changes to double yellow lines and parking across the town. Town Cllrs will recall examining this map earlier in the year but are welcome to drop in. Times to be confirmed.

Callaughtons Ash: applications go live from end November/early December for local people with local connections. Applicants need to be registered with Homepoint.

436 Bus Service: from Monday of this week, the 436 service, operating between Shrewsbury and Bridgnorth, has been operated by Select Bus Services Ltd, a small company in Stafford. The last time Arriva lost the ability to operate the service, it was a disaster; I have made my concerns about changing the service known. However, whilst it's early days, there has been little interruption to the service so far but there may be teething problems.

Hedge Cutting: I share residents' recent concerns regarding hedge cutting in Homer, where arguably too much of the hedge was cut. I am pleased to say that a team have been out today to remedy the situation and tidy the hedge up. Over the weekend, my father and I will be cutting the hedges on the Gaskell Recreation Ground on behalf of the management committee, where we will be considerate of its foliage.

Surgery: my next advice surgery will be held this Saturday, 9th September, between 10.30 am and 12 noon at the museum. No appointment is necessary and I'll be joined by Town Cllr Wilfred Grainger and a representative from the Police. The subsequent surgery will be on 14th October."

Councillor Thomas was asked whether there were any plans for drainage in the hollow in the surface of the High Street. He replied that this had been raised during the flooding walkabout and he would request an update.

8. Minutes

- a. It was RESOLVED to amend page 16/23 of the draft minutes to record that Councillor Linda West left the meeting to deal with an emergency. With this amendment, it was RESOLVED to approve and adopt the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 6th July 2023.
- b. It was RESOLVED to adopt the minutes of the Planning & Environment Committee meetings held on 6th June and 4th July 2023.
- c. It was RESOLVED to adopt the minutes of the Finance & Asset Management Committee meeting held on 23rd May 2023.
- d. It was RESOLVED to adopt the minutes of the HR Committee meeting held on 6th April 2023.

9. Town Clerk's Report

Members noted the written and verbal report from the Town Clerk.

10. Investment Strategy

It was RESOLVED to approve the draft Investment Strategy, as recommended by the Finance & Asset Management Committee.

11. Grants Policy

It was RESOLVED to approve the revised Grants Policy, as recommended by the Finance & Asset Management Committee.

12. Disposal and Destruction Procedure for Town Council Records

It was RESOLVED to approve an amendment to point 3.3 of the Disposal and Destruction Procedure for Town Council Records.

13. Windmill Hill Nature Reserve Agreement

- a. Members reviewed the latest version of the draft Windmill Hill Nature Reserve Agreement. It was RESOLVED to approve the draft Windmill Hill Nature Reserve Agreement.
- b. It was RESOLVED to formally consult Natural England on the designation of Windmill Hill as a Local Nature Reserve.

14. The Guildhall Project

Members noted a verbal update on the Guildhall Project. A meeting had been held with Greenwood Projects earlier in the week to review tenders, to be considered at agenda item 30.

15. Linden Lodge

Members noted that the registration of Linden Lodge to the Town Council had been completed.

16. Neighbourhood Plan Review

- a. Members noted that, following consideration by the Planning & Environment Committee, Alison Eardley had been appointed as consultant to support the review of the Neighbourhood Plan.
- b. Members noted that the Town Council had been awarded a grant of £9,600 towards the cost of reviewing the Neighbourhood Plan. An online meeting had been held with Locality and AECOM with regard to additional design codes technical support and it had been confirmed that the Council's application would be supported.
- c. The next step would be to liaise with Alison Eardley to begin the desk-based review of the Neighbourhood Plan and check compliance with current planning policy. The consultant had already highlighted that some elements of the current plan were very light, eg. designated green spaces. The structure and development of the steering committee would also be considered. It was likely that there would be a main committee with sub-committees for specific elements of the Plan. It was noted that it would be beneficial to involve a cross-section of the community.

The Clerk was asked to add consideration of the composition of the steering group to the following month's agenda.

17. Flooding

Due to the confidential nature of the content, it was RESOLVED to consider the Flood Risk Mitigation Update from WSP in confidential session (see minute 28).

18. 'Made in Shropshire' Markets

Members received a verbal report on the artisan market held on 19th August. The market had been well attended and the market traders were content. No major issues had been raised by local shopkeepers although additional promotion for the markets had been requested.

Following the positive impact of the markets to date, **it was RESOLVED to hold an additional 'Made in Shropshire' market on Saturday, 28th October 2023**. Councillor White was asked to notify the Christmas Fayre Committee and offer a stall at the market to promote the Christmas Fayre.

It was noted that dates for next year's markets would be confirmed in due course.

19. Expansion of Regular Market Stalls

Members noted that efforts had been made to increase the regular market stalls under the Guildhall and Corn Exchange to extend the current offer. It was hoped to see an additional four or five stalls on coming Saturdays and possibly other days which could help to increase footfall in the town on a regular basis.

20. Christmas Lights Switch-on

It was RESOLVED to hold a Christmas Lights Switch-on event on the evening of Thursday, 23rd November 2023.

It was noted that in previous years it had been the responsibility of the Mayor, with a working group, to organise the event. The compère should be booked as soon as possible and other arrangements made. **It was RESOLVED that Councillors Fenwick, Themans, Thomas, West and White would form the working party, aided by interested members of the community.**

21. Civic Service

Members were notified that the Civic Service would be held at 11.00am on Sunday, 24th September at Holy Trinity Church and were encouraged to attend. Councillors were asked to meet at 10.45am at the Corn Exchange in order to process to the church. It was noted that church members would serve tea, coffee and soft drinks after the service, as usual, but that if wine were to be offered, the Council would need to provide helpers to serve and wash up.

22. 'Climate Champion' for the Town Council

Members reviewed the role of Climate Champion, currently held by Councillor Christian Toon. Councillor Toon reported that he had found it difficult to give the role sufficient time due to other commitments and that another Councillor might be able to engage more fully.

It was RESOLVED that Councillor Linda West should take on the role of Climate Champion for the Council, with support from the Planning & Environment Committee. Councillor Toon offered to update Councillor West on developments so far.

23. The Marches Forward Partnership

Members noted correspondence from Shropshire Councillor Lezley Picton, Leader of Shropshire Council, regarding The Marches Forward Partnership. Shropshire Council would be working with Herefordshire, Monmouthshire and Powys County Councils to share best practice and resources and aim to unlock funding for those areas. This was expected to be a positive initiative for these councils.

24. Consultation

- a. Statement of Licensing Policy 2024 – 2029. Deadline for response: 27th August 2023.

Members noted that this policy was concerned only with licensed premises and the sale of alcohol and that, therefore, no response had been made on behalf of the Town Council.

25. Correspondence

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

- a. SALC information bulletins and other information.

It was noted that Councillor Susan Crooke-Williams had attended the SALC Bridgnorth & Shifnal Area Committee meeting on 4th September where Eddie West, Planning Policy & Strategy Manager at Shropshire Council, had spoken on the Local Plan and Place Plans. Councillor Crooke-Williams provide an overview of the meeting and advised that the presentation would be forwarded by SALC in due course. Eddie West had stated that it was still hoped that the review of the Local Plan would be completed mid 2024. The minutes of the meeting were available if other Councillors wished to see them.

- 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 and newsletters
- g. VCSA newsletters
- h. News from Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust.

Councillor Susan Crooke Williams had attended the Shrewsbury & Telford NHS Trust (SATH) AGM on 30th August. She provided an overview of the meeting: SATH was now supporting a population of 500,000 and employed 7,000 people. There were still problem areas: the CQC assessment of the Trust was ‘inadequate’ although improvements had been made and were continuing. Following the Ockenden investigation into maternity services, 80% of recommendations had been implemented and inspectors were content with the progress. The other significant problem was finance: there was a deficit budget in 2023/4 of £45.5m. The final decision on the Accident & Emergency departments would be made in the new year.

- i. Latest news from South Shropshire Climate Action
- j. Friendly Bus newsletter July/August
- k. Latest news from Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership
- l. Neighbourhood Planning Newsletter August 2023 from Locality
- m. Invitation to AGM of Shrewsbury & Telford Hospital NHS Trust
- n. Healthwatch Shropshire press release
- o. Details of Carbon Literacy Training 12th and 19th September.
- p. Notification of vacancies for Community Governors for William Brookes School.

26. Agenda items for next Town Council meeting

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

- update on Gaskell Recreation Ground

27. Date of next meeting

Members noted that the next meeting would be held on Thursday, 5th October 2023 at 7.00pm at the Guildhall, Much Wenlock.

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.

Having declared a pecuniary interest in the following agenda item, Councillor Thomas left the meeting.

28. Flooding

Members reviewed the Flood Risk Mitigation Update from WSP. **It was RESOLVED to refer the report to the Council's Strategic Flood Working Group for consideration and report back to full Council with a suggested response.**

Councillor Thomas returned to the meeting.

29. Town Council Insurance

Members considered renewal of the Council's insurance policy.

It was RESOLVED to commission Alpha Chartered Surveyors to carry out reinstatement valuations of the Council's properties.

It was RESOLVED to amend the insured reinstatement cost of the Guildhall to £2.5m, pending the outcome of the reinstatement valuation.

It was RESOLVED to renew the Council's insurance with Zurich for 2023/24.

30. 10 High Street

- It was noted that the refurbishment of 10 High Street had been largely completed.

It was RESOLVED to allow the incoming tenant to select flooring within a budget to be agreed by the Finance & Asset Management Committee when indicative quotations were to hand.

- Members considered quotations for the letting and management of 10 High Street. **It was RESOLVED to appoint Andrew Dixon & Co to market, let and manage 10 High Street on behalf of the Council.**

- It was RESOLVED to obtain an Energy Performance Certificate for 10 High Street, if required.**

31. Consultants for Guildhall Project

- Members noted that tenders submitted for the production of a Project Viability Appraisal for the Guildhall had been opened in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders on 5th September and assessed against a scoring matrix. Members considered the tenders and report prepared by Greenwood Projects.

It was RESOLVED to appoint Lathams to produce the Project Viability Appraisal for the Guildhall.

- Members noted that tenders submitted for Audience Development for the Guildhall had been opened in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders on 5th September and assessed against a scoring matrix. Members considered the tenders and report prepared by Greenwood Projects.

It was RESOLVED to appoint Focus Consultants as Audience Development Consultant for the Guildhall project.

The meeting closed at 8.40 pm.

Signed Mayor Date