

MUCH WENLOCK TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
held at The Guildhall, Much Wenlock
7 pm on Thursday 4th April 2019

Present:

Clr. Edgcumbe Venning (in the chair), Clr. Adam Davy, Clr. Herbert Harper, Clr. Mary Hill, Clr. Yvonne Holyoak, Clr. Marcus Themans, Clr. Daniel Thomas, Clr. Allan Walter and Clr. Milner Whiteman OBE.

Locum Town Clerk:

Trudi Barrett

In attendance:

8 members of the public

1) Chairman's Welcome

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting, his last full Council meeting as Mayor. He thanked Councillors for their support over the last two years and wished Councillors Bert Harper and Daniel Thomas success in their forthcoming roles. The Chairman thanked Councillors for their participation and involvement in the recent Annual Town Meeting.

The Mayor reported that he and the Mayoress had attended the Live Arts Festival and represented the community at the opening of the newly refurbished fire station. They had also been pleased to accept an invitation to a visit by the Princess Royal to Barrow 1618 Free School on 10th April.

The next Council surgery would be held on 6th April with Councillors Mary Hill and Allan Walter in attendance.

The Mayor noted the appearance of a For Sale board on the former Barclays Bank premises. This was a mistake, for which Barclays had apologised. The Mayor offered reassurance that negotiations with the Town Council were still progressing.

2) Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Jenkins, who was working, and Councillor Southan who was unwell.

These apologies were ACCEPTED and AGREED as APPROVED absence.

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.

Councillor Thomas declared a pecuniary interest in Item 7, Confirmation of Local Connection, as the individuals concerned were family members.

4) Dispensations

None requested. It was noted that in November 2018 all Councillors who held accounts with Barclays Bank had been granted dispensations for a period of up to two years to participate in discussions concerning negotiations with Barclays Bank relating to the purchase of 10 High Street, Much Wenlock.

5) Shropshire Council Report

Shropshire Councillor, David Turner, gave a verbal report.

He expressed his disappointment that bring banks were to be removed from public locations following Shropshire Council consultation. He hoped that this would not place an additional burden on community litter pickers. He noted the consultation regarding SEND transport, which affected a number of local residents. He also noted consultation on proposals to reduce local bus services, which would affect many in the community

Councillor Turner's next surgery would be held in Much Wenlock Museum on 6th April when he would be joined by a representative of the police and a Town Councillor.

Councillor Turner was asked whether cross subsidies would be possible for the bus routes. He replied that he did not know.

NOTED

6) Public Session

None.

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

7) Confirmation of Local Connection

Councillors considered a request for confirmation of local connection for Mr Max Thomas and Mr Lewis Thomas with regard to applications for Build Your Own Affordable Homes. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED AND RESOLVED to confirm the local connection of both individuals.**

Councillor Thomas returned to the meeting.

8) Minutes

- a) The minutes of a Town Council meeting held on 7th March 2019 were considered for approval. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that the minutes be signed and APPROVED as a true record.**
- b) The minutes of an extraordinary Town Council meeting held on 21st March 2019 were considered for approval. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that the minutes be signed and APPROVED as a true record.**
- c) The minutes of a Planning & Environment Committee meeting held on 5th February 2019 were considered for adoption. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that the minutes be ADOPTED as a true record.**
- d) The minutes of a Finance & Asset Management Committee meeting held on 26th February 2019 were considered for adoption. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that the minutes be ADOPTED as a true record.**
- e) The minutes of a HR Committee meeting held on 4th October 2018 were considered for adoption. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that the minutes be ADOPTED as a true record.**

9) Locum Town Clerk's Report

Members received a written report from the Locum Town Clerk on outstanding matters and action taken since the last Council meeting, as well as a verbal update. The Locum Town Clerk reported that the Conservation Officer had requested a photograph of the proposed location on the Corn Exchange for the defibrillator. It was noted that the Mayor would endeavour to bring a representative from Arrol & Snell to the next Finance Committee meeting.

NOTED

10) Internal Audit Report

Councillors noted the Internal Audit Report dated 20th March 2019 and recommendations from the Finance Committee on how to address matters raised.

It was noted that appropriate books of accounts had been kept throughout the year and the financial regulations met. Payments in excess of £500 not been uploaded to the Council's website since August 2018, but this was now in hand. The internal auditor had noted that the financial future of the Council was unclear and this was being addressed. The RFO would be preparing year end accounting summaries for two charity accounts – Thorn Pudsey and Barnado's Morris & Cooke to allow consideration of closure of these accounts.

It was noted that some Councillors had experienced difficulty understanding the presentation of the accounts. The Locum Town Clerk undertook to investigate alternative ways of presenting financial information to make it more easily accessible. It was noted that any projects proposed should be accompanied by full costings.

The internal auditor had highlighted the need for a Strategic Plan and linked Strategic Financial Plan. Advice was being sought on the format for this and the matter would be discussed further at the next Finance & Asset Management Committee meeting.

11) Much Wenlock and Surrounding Area Place Plan

Councillors reviewed the draft version of the Much Wenlock and Surrounding Area Place Plan and considered recommendations for amendments from the Planning & Environment Committee. Councillors agreed to forward the recommended amendments to Shropshire Council.

It was noted that Councillors Edgcombe Venning and Hill would be attending a meeting on 9th April regarding the Power Station and infrastructure implications relating to its development.

12) Neighbourhood Plan

Agenda item 12 b was considered first.

- a. The Chairman noted that the Neighbourhood Plan was an important document contributing to decision making across all sectors of the community by Much Wenlock Town Council and Shropshire Council. The Plan had been adopted in 2014 and extended to 2026. It would seem appropriate to review the Plan at some stage to maximise its weight in decision making and ensure its compatibility with the Local Plan planned for adoption in 2020/2021. In order to ensure the Neighbourhood Plan continued to carry maximum weight as a decision influencing document timing was critical.

It was noted that there was no legal requirement to review or update a Neighbourhood Plan. Policies might become out of date if they conflicted with a Local Plan that was updated after production of the Neighbourhood Plan. The most recent Plan would take precedence.

The Council had sought advice on the legal position and two separate bodies had confirmed that the Town Council was the Qualifying Body in Much Wenlock and only the Town Council could update the Plan.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and unanimously RESOLVED not to review the Neighbourhood Plan prior to the adoption of the Local Plan in 2020/21 and that, after that adoption, the Town Council should investigate the possible need for and means of a review.

- b. Councillors noted activities being undertaken by the "Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Refresh 2019" group. This was a group of local people whose objective seemed to be either to seek a review of the Neighbourhood Plan or to object to the adoption of the preferred residential development site by Shropshire Council for inclusion in the Local Plan currently under preparation.

The Chairman welcomed members of the community having a strong voice in decision making affecting Much Wenlock. He noted that the Council was there to represent the community, not to build barriers of division. Much Wenlock Town Council was the democratic voice of the community and the qualifying body to enable a review to be undertaken. The Chairman welcomed local people taking an interest in factors affecting the content of the Neighbourhood Plan but he suggested this was not the time for Councillors to actively support the Refresh Group or their objectives. In his view, active support of the group would contradict the motion the Council had just approved. However, the Chairman supported members of the community voicing their opinions and concerns to the Council or to individual Councillors to ensure that their concerns were eased.

It was noted that the volunteers involved with the group had nothing to do with the Town Council. It was thought that the name of the group was confusing for members of the public.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that the Town Council would not participate in or support the Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Refresh 2019 group.

13) Town Markets

Councillors noted a report from the Media, Marketing and Tourism Group regarding options for future markets in the town. Initial discussions had taken place with a commercial organiser of markets and options were being considered for regular small markets and a couple of major events per year. There was no intention to compete with or replace existing events but to create a culture where event organisers could cooperate with each other. The commercial organisation would take on complete responsibility for events, although some help with parking arrangements might be needed. The Media, Marketing and Tourism Group were seeking feedback from local traders about their ideas and were hoping to bring forward proposals later in the year for 2020 events. The Group would keep Councillors informed of progress.

14) Gaskell Recreation Ground

Councillors noted an update on progress with projects on the Gaskell Recreation Ground. Arrangements for the planned drainage work were moving forward. There had been a delay with consideration of the Leader funding application but Councillor Southan would shortly be meeting the Shropshire Council officer concerned to resolve outstanding matters. Demolition of the toilet block was due to commence on 8th April. Replacement play equipment had been ordered and was expected to be installed before the Easter holidays.

15) Consultation

Councillors considered the following consultation:

- a. Shropshire Council consultation on the reduction of local bus service subsidies for the financial year 2019/20 (25th March to 6th May 2019).

It was noted that Shropshire Council proposed to save money by reducing services on some routes as well as making changes to charging on park and ride services. It was proposed to reduce the 436 Shrewsbury to Bridgnorth Service via Much Wenlock from a one hourly to a two hourly service.

It was noted that Shropshire Council had a statutory duty to provide bus services. The Shropshire Bus Strategy 2016-2021 included a bus service prioritisation framework which showed that the 436 service was ranked second place in the county. It was noted that this service provided transport to Shrewsbury for college or hospital services and linked to routes in other towns. The proposed cuts would affect particularly young people, older people and more vulnerable members of the community.

RESOLVED to suspend standing orders to allow a member of the public to speak.

A member of the public reported that not everybody was able to complete the consultation survey online and asked that the Council ensure paper copies of the survey were made available in the library. Perhaps the forms could also be returned to the library to be passed on to Shropshire Council. Another option might be to put forms on the buses themselves.

RESOLVED to reinvoke standing orders.

Councillors expressed no objections to the changes to the park and ride service.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and unanimously RESOLVED to make a strong case to Shropshire Council to retain the hourly service on the 436 bus.

- b. Shropshire Council consultation on the review of rates for commissioning of residential and nursing beds (18th March to 26th April 2019). Noted.
- c. Shropshire Council consultation on proposed changes from September 2019 to the policy on travel assistance for SEND nursery and post-16 students (18th March to 26th April 2019).
It was noted that under the proposals current pupils would continue to receive funding but new pupils would not receive funding. In a rural area the travel was necessary and young people and disabled people would suffer. A fair allocation of funding should be in place for future needs as well as for current; there was no indication of how people would manage in future.
It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and unanimously RESOLVED to submit the above comments to Shropshire Council.
The Town Council should support Councillor Turner's stance of objection. In addition, the Locum Clerk was asked to seek the views of the rector of Holy Trinity Church.

16) Correspondence

Members received and **NOTED** the following:

- a) SALC information bulletin and other information – emailed to Members.
- b) Shropshire Council Early Help Update March 2019 – emailed to Members.
- c) Notes from BMEC Well-Being Forum 27th February 2019 – emailed to Members.

17) Agenda items for next Town Council meeting

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

18) Date of next meeting

Members **NOTED** that the Annual Town Council Meeting would take place on **2nd May 2019** followed by the re-convened Annual Town Council meeting on **9th May 2019** at 7.00pm 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.

19) Barclays Bank

Councillors noted an update on the Town Council’s negotiations with Barclays Bank. Information was awaited from Barclays’ solicitors. The For Sale board had been erected in error, and an undertaking had been given to remove the board as a matter of urgency.

20) HR Support

Councillors noted that the current contract with Ellis Whittam for the provision of Employment Law and HR Advice was due to expire on 25th April 2019. Following consideration of quotations to hand, it was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to place the contract for the provision of Employment Law and HR Advice with Ellis Whittam for a further three year term.**

The Locum Town Clerk left the meeting.

21) Recruitment of new Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer (RFO)

Councillors noted a report from the Recruitment Panel. Following the unsuccessful outcome of the recruitment process for a Town Clerk and RFO undertaken by the Council, the Recruitment Panel had considered other options. The Panel recommended separating the roles of Town Clerk and RFO and had explored this option with current administrative staff.

On the recommendation of the Recruitment Panel, **it was PROPOSED, SECONDED and unanimously RESOLVED to appoint the current Locum Town Clerk, Trudi Barrett, to the role of Town Clerk, and to appoint Diane Barlow, current Assistant to the Town Clerk, to the role of RFO and Assistant to the Town Clerk. The role of Town Clerk would be part-time, 26 hours per week. The role of RFO and Assistant to the Town Clerk would be part time, 25 hours per week.**

It was further RESOLVED to recruit a part-time Administrative Assistant for 12 hours per week, on SCP 1, to provide additional necessary resources in the Council office.

The meeting closed at 8.45pm

Signed.....
Town Mayor

Date.....