

10/20

MUCH WENLOCK TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
held remotely by video conference
at 7 pm on Thursday, 2nd July 2020

Present: Cllr. Mary Hill, Cllr. Yvonne Holyoak, Cllr. Dafydd Jenkins, Cllr. Matthew Park, Cllr. Natalie Park, Cllr. Marcus Themans, Cllr. Daniel Thomas (in the chair), Cllr. Allan Walter, Cllr. Duncan White, Cllr. Milner Whiteman OBE.

Town Clerk: Trudi Barrett

In attendance: Reverend Matthew Stafford, Shropshire Councillor David Turner and several members of the public.

1. Chairman's welcome

The Mayor welcomed everybody to the meeting. He reported that he had been pleased to join Reverend Stafford recently for the re-opening of Holy Trinity Church for private prayer. It was good to see the town gradually opening up again with the easing of restrictions relating to Covid-19, and the appearance of the town centre was enhanced by the attractive floral displays. The Mayor advised that the sale of Shadwell Quarry had been completed recently and it was hoped that positive steps would be taken to address the recent problems.

2. Apologies

An apology was received from Cllr. Herbert Harper, who had been unable to join the meeting.

This apology was 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.

Cllrs Natalie and Matthew Park declared a pecuniary interest in agenda item 12 (minute 12), Reinvigoration of Much Wenlock Town Centre, as the proprietors of a High Street shop.

4. Dispensations

None requested.

5. Shropshire Council report

Shropshire Councillor David Turner gave a verbal report.

Councillor Turner noted the implementation of highways measures in the town to facilitate social distancing. He advised that the measures were temporary and could be changed. Parking restrictions had been implemented on the A4169 near to Shadwell Quarry to discourage visitors to the quarry. Gas works would be undertaken at various locations around the town from the end of July.

Councillor Turner had been pressing Shropshire Council for the further suspension of car parking charges in the town but had yet to receive a reply.

On 20th July Shropshire Council's Cabinet would be considering the Local Plan review pre-submission consultation document. The draft proposals would be published on 10th July and there would be public consultation over the summer.

The next litter pick was scheduled for 31st July.

Councillor Turner's advice surgeries were still suspended but he could be contacted by telephone or email.

Councillor Jenkins suggested that the parking restrictions on the A4169 were not extensive enough as access could be gained to the quarry further along the road towards Farley. Councillor Turner replied that consultation had been carried out prior to the introduction of the restrictions and the scheme proposed had been implemented. Changes could be requested but the current scheme had taken months to come to fruition.

Councillor Turner was thanked for his report.

6. Public session

Mr J Orves, a resident of Hunters Gate, requested that the Council reconsider its position on the proposed housing development adjacent to the current Hunters Gate estate. He noted that the number of houses proposed in the locality had increased and cited the plans for Ironbridge Power Station. He had previously highlighted to Shropshire

Council his view that the number of houses proposed for site MUW012 would not be viable and now the number proposed had been increased. Further flooding had occurred at the site, higher up the hill, and he believed that the proposed design would not take that into account. The proposals were for a significantly higher number of houses than were included in the Neighbourhood Development Plan. He argued that the drainage problems should be resolved by the builder of the existing houses and he requested that the Town Council inform Shropshire Council that the proposals were not appropriate.

Councillor Jenkins expressed some support for the views put forward and noted that the infill housing being completed was bringing the town close to the housing target previously proposed.

Shropshire Councillor Turner noted that the characteristics of the flooding which had occurred in February had been different to those of previous flooding events and different measures would be required to address the problem.

7. Minutes

- a. The minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 4th June 2020 were considered for approval.
It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 4th June 2020 be APPROVED and ADOPTED as a true record.
- b. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that the minutes of the Planning & Environment Committee meeting held on 3rd March 2020 be ADOPTED.**

8. Town Clerk's Report

Members received a written report from the Town Clerk on outstanding matters and action taken since the last Council meeting. It was further reported that the transfer of the telephone kiosk in Homer to the Town Council had been completed and that a letter drop would be arranged to the residents of Homer regarding the future use of the kiosk. **NOTED.**

9. Flooding and Neighbourhood Development Plan

Councillors considered correspondence received from Mr Orves regarding flooding problems in the town, the relationship between housing development and flooding attenuation, and the importance of the Neighbourhood Development Plan.

Councillor Hill agreed that errors had been made with Hunters Gate and the problems had been raised recently with John Bellis, the Drainage and Flood Risk Manager at Shropshire Council. He had concurred that it was now too late to raise the issues with Persimmon, the developer, and that due diligence had not been carried out by Shropshire Council at the time.

With regard to future development, the Neighbourhood Development Plan specified that sites of no more than 25 houses were desirable. However, no specific sites had been identified in the Plan. Whilst such smaller sites were desirable, they were not practical.

It was noted that the Town Council could continue to ask for funding to resolve the flooding problems but could not make this happen. Money had been set aside by Severn Trent for flood alleviation but this would not be taken up in the current year and it was thought that the proposed scheme would need to be revised. Flooding problems across the town needed to be addressed.

In respect of housing development at Hunter's Gate, the only position the Town Council had taken was to reluctantly support 80 houses on the site, providing this resolved the drainage problems. Until the draft Local Plan was published, it was not known what number of houses would be included. The Council would consider the proposals in the Local Plan when it went out to consultation.

Members noted the impact of proposals for several large housing developments around Much Wenlock, such as the Power Station, Bridgnorth, Presthope and, potentially, Shadwell Quarry.

It was RESOLVED to suspend Standing Orders to allow Shropshire Councillor David Turner to speak on this item.

Councillor Turner stated that the responsible authority at the time of the Hunters Gate development had been Bridgnorth District Council, not Shropshire Council. He believed that the Town Council should have commented on the revised proposals for the extension to the site sooner.

Town Councillors responded that they would consider the proposals made in the Local Plan and respond to the consultation.

The Mayor advised that the Drainage and Flood Risk Manager at Shropshire Council had offered to meet residents of Hunters Gate to discuss the flooding issues.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to advise the petitioners from Hunters Gate of the offer made by the Drainage and Flood Risk Manager to meet to discuss the flooding problems and that a representative of the Town Council should attend any meeting arranged.

It was RESOLVED to reinvoke Standing Orders.

10. Shadwell Quarry

Members noted responses received from the owners of Shadwell Quarry and that the sale of the quarry had now been completed. The new owners were understood to be Avon Estates Ltd, a company which owned a number of holiday parks around the country.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to engage with the new owners of Shadwell Quarry as soon as possible.

It was noted that the new parking restrictions were preventing parking near to the quarry but had displaced vehicles to other areas in the town. There were still problems with unauthorised access to the quarry and it was hoped that the new owners would secure the area.

11. Highways Measures to Ensure Social Distancing

It was noted that parking had been suspended in some of the parking spaces outside the George & Dragon public house to allow for social distancing on that side of the road. There was discussion about possible alternative highways measures for the town centre, including traffic calming, width restriction, pedestrianisation, pedestrian priority and making Wilmore Street one-way. It was noted that residents with poor mobility valued the car parking provision in the High Street. It was suggested that a full discussion of options be arranged with Shropshire Council.

Having declared a pecuniary interest in the following item, Councillors Matthew and Natalie Park left the meeting.

12. Reinvigoration of Much Wenlock Town Centre

The Mayor had spoken to shop traders in the town about measures to reinvigorate the town centre. They were keen to retain free car parking. Councillors were supportive of the continuation of free car parking, or the possible alternative of reduced car parking charges.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to write to Shropshire Council to request the extension of free car parking in the town.

The idea of a 'food court' under the Corn Exchange had also been raised. This would be an area with tables and chairs where visitors could sit to eat food purchased from the town's shops and cafés.

Councillors noted the current use of the area under the Corn Exchange for access to the library, market stalls and occasional events such as the Remembrance Day service and musical performances. It was noted that there were existing bookings for regular market traders. Councillors agreed that, should this go ahead, the shop/café traders would need to be responsible for the furniture and its management.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that Councillors were open to the idea of the space being used as a 'food court' providing this did not obstruct access to the library or interfere with the market stalls, and that appropriate safety measures could be put in place. Further liaison with the traders should be undertaken.

Councillors Mathew Park and Natalie Park returned to the meeting.

13. Much Wenlock Christmas Fayre

Members noted the decision of the Christmas Fayre Committee to cancel this year's Christmas Fayre. Councillors were sorry to hear that this had been necessary but understood the decision. It was noted that it might be possible to hold a smaller event at short notice, should circumstances allow.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to send a letter of support to the Christmas Fayre Committee, acknowledging the difficulty of the situation and the hard work of the committee.

14. Annual Accounts 2019/20

- a. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to approve income and expenditure from 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020.**
- b. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to approve the balance sheet as at 31st March 2020.**
- c. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to approve the bank reconciliation as at 31st March 2020.**

15. Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2019/2020

- a. Members considered the final internal audit report for the financial year 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020. Councillors were pleased with the excellent report which had highlighted no areas of concern.
It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to approve the annual internal audit report for the financial year 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020.
- b. Members considered the Town Council's response to Section 1 of the AGAR – the Annual Governance Statement.
It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that the Council had a sound system of internal control, including arrangements for the preparation of the Accounting Statements, and to approve the Annual Governance Statement 2019/20.
- c. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that, for the year ended 31st March 2019, the Accounting Statements in the AGAR presented fairly the financial position of the Town Council and its income and expenditure and to approve the Accounting Statement for 2019/2020 (Section 2 of the AGAR).**
- d. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to approve the Explanation of Variances.**
- e. It was noted that the period for the exercise of public rights would run from Monday, 6th July 2020 to Friday, 14th August 2020 and that the appropriate notice would be displayed on the Town Council website and notice board.

16. Charity Accounts

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to approve the accounting statements from 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020 for the following Charity Accounts: Cooke Clock Account, Thorn Pudsey Account, Barnados Morris Account.

17. Easing of Lockdown Restrictions and Council Operations

- a. Members noted the easing of lockdown measures to permit most businesses, some tourist attractions and outdoor play areas to re-open from 4th July 2020.
- b. Members considered the re-opening of the Council office, the Guildhall, Queen Street public toilets and Gaskell Ground play area. It was noted that Covid-19 risk assessments had been prepared by the Clerk.
It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to re-open the play area on the Gaskell Recreation Ground from 4th July 2020, following completion of a Covid-19 risk assessment and the implementation of appropriate safety measures.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to delegate to the Town Clerk authority to re-open the Queen Street public toilets following completion of a Covid-19 risk assessment once appropriate safety measures had been implemented by the cleaning and maintenance contractor, Healthmatic.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to delegate to the Town Clerk authority to re-open the Guildhall to the public following completion of a Covid-19 risk assessment and the implementation of appropriate safety measures. The Clerk was asked to check the date that the town museum was planning to re-open.

With regard to the Council office in the Corn Exchange, it was noted that the advice from central government was still to work from home if possible. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that the Council's administrative staff should continue to work from home, going into the office only when this was essential for operational reasons.**
- c. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to delegate authority to the Clerk to purchase necessary protective equipment, sanitiser and cleaning materials required for the safe re-opening of the above facilities.**

18. Consultation

Councillors noted the following consultation:

- a. Local Government Association Consultation on Draft Model Member Code of Conduct
Councillors were encouraged to respond individually to the consultation.

19. Correspondence

Members received and noted the following, which had been distributed via e-mail:

- a. SALC information bulletin and other information
- b. Shropshire Council and central government information connected with the coronavirus pandemic
- c. Shropshire Council Press Releases
- d. Notification of the Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust's virtual community engagement meeting on 24th June 2020.
- e. Rural Bulletins

20. Agenda items for next town council meeting

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

21. Date of next meeting

Members noted that the next meeting was scheduled to take place on 3rd September 2020.

The meeting closed at 9.00pm

Signed
Town Mayor

Date

DRAFT