

# MUCH WENLOCK TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the  
**TOWN COUNCIL MEETING**  
held remotely by video conference  
at 7 pm on Thursday, 8<sup>th</sup> October 2020

**Present:** Cllr. Mary Hill, Cllr. Yvonne Holyoak, Cllr. Herbert Harper, 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, Mr Nic Allen (Avon Estates) and several members of the public.

## 1. Chairman's welcome

The Mayor welcomed everybody to the meeting and thanked Nic Allen of Avon Estates for attending.

He advised that Town Councillors had recently met Shropshire Council highways officers, along with Shropshire Councillor Turner, to consider the impact of traffic in Much Wenlock arising from the proposed Buildwas Power Station development, particularly on the Gaskell corner. It had been a useful conversation and discussions were continuing.

The Mayor had joined the town litter pick on 23<sup>rd</sup> September, marking the 'Keep Britain Tidy' campaign. He thanked the volunteers who work so hard throughout the year to keep the town litter free.

The Mayor noted that good progress was being made with the grant funded project to create short video clips to promote the town and encourage visitors. The first business coaching session had taken place with two further sessions to come.

The Mayor encouraged everyone to reply to the Town Council's consultation on the future use of 10 High Street by the deadline of 31<sup>st</sup> October.

## 2. Apologies

None. All Councillors were present.

## 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. Shropshire Council report

Shropshire Councillor David Turner gave a verbal report.

Councillor Turner noted that the Local Plan Review consultation had closed the previous week and that there had been a huge response. Proposals for Buildwas Power Station had attracted much interest. A significant investment in traffic measures would be needed to deal with the expected highways impact of this development. Councillor Turner did not believe that the proposals put forward by the applicant to deal with the highways impact would be of benefit. He advised that it was still worth commenting on the application before the Planning Officer wrote his report.

Councillor Turner advised that problems locally could be reported to Shropshire Council by telephone during working hours or on their website at any time. Councillor Turner was available by telephone or email.

Councillor Turner was thanked for his report.

## 6. Public session

The following contributions were received from members of the public, who all spoke regarding agenda item 15:

- a. Mr Paul Hanafin advised that he was a professional Transport Planner. He was concerned that there had been no traffic study or survey on which to base proposals for the introduction of a one-way system or road closure. A full transport study, including parking, should be undertaken for the town. A thorough understanding of the issues, concerns and traffic movements could deliver a proper transport strategy for the town. Only then would it make sense to ask Shropshire Council for changes, based on empirical evidence.

Mr Hanafin noted that Covid-19 had affected traffic movements so the current situation was not representative. Much Wenlock benefited from having a population and Council who wanted the best for the town. There were a number of local people with relevant experience who would be prepared to help with investigations.

Councillors raised the possibility of 'naked streets' or shared spaces in town centres which gave priority to pedestrians and slowed traffic.

Mr Hanafin indicated he would be happy to attend a meeting for further discussions.

- b. Mr Will Benbow advised that there were houses on Wilmore Street whose sole access was via the road in front. They had no rear access to their properties and could not be left without any vehicular access. This needed to be factored into any proposals for the street.
- c. Mr Eric Humphries noted that he had served on the Town Council for 30 years and that a one-way system and the closure of Wilmore Street had been looked at several times. However, this would send far more traffic to the Gaskell corner or result in drivers cutting through the narrow back roads. He also referenced the need for access for emergency services and for large tankers going to the sewage works, as well as the impact on those holding weddings and funerals at the church. He urged Councillors to think back to the closure of Wilmore Street for gas works the previous year and the impact of that closure. He acknowledged that debate about heavy goods vehicles in the town was needed. Mr Humphries called on Councillors to vote against the motion.

Mr Humphries indicated he would also be willing to join a group to discuss traffic issues.

- d. Mr Arthur Hill referred to the dangers along Barrow Road, Wilmore Street and Sheinton Street between 8.15 and 9.00 am, when there was a continual flow of traffic going to William Brookes School. There were cars parked on one side of the street and children walking along the other. Cars regularly mounted the pavement as they could not pass. Drivers used Wilmore Street and Sheinton Street to avoid the traffic on the Gaskell corner. Mr Hill noted that the road surface on Sheinton Street was also deteriorating and that this was being exacerbated by non-residents of the street making use of the free parking there. He suggested residents' parking permits. He had also observed tractors with trailers going through the town, which was unacceptable. When there was heavy rainfall or flooding, water ran along Sheinton Street, into and past the drains. Pedestrians were then covered in water as vehicles drove by. Mr Hill suggested that Shropshire Council should be asked for a three-month trial period without traffic along the road.

## **7. Shadwell Quarry**

The Mayor welcomed Mr Nic Allen, Director of Avon Estates Ltd, the new owners of Shadwell Quarry, to the meeting.

Mr Allen advised that the purchase of the Quarry had finally been completed around July and that the Quarry was actually owned by Shadwell Parks Estates Ltd. The first action of the new owners had been to look at security, particularly on hotter days and at weekends. Fencing was also being upgraded and was expected to be finished in the next few days.

There was not likely to be anything happening on site for the next going to see anything happen for next 6 – 12 months. The owners would consider the existing planning permission and intended to apply for more lodges as well as support for a warden's unit for 12 months of the year, tied to the park. Holiday permission for 12 months of the year was already in place.

Councillors were pleased with the progress made so far on site, with improved fencing and security to prevent illegal swimming. It was noted that when the planning permission was granted some years ago, it included a condition that a public toilet would be provided on the Gaskell Recreation Ground.

Mr Allen advised that this was not clear at present. Legally, this condition had not been included properly in the planning permission. However, he would look into this matter.

The Mayor noted that there had previously been a toilet block on the site so it was likely that the necessary services were already in place.

Mr Allen was asked about a highways' contribution of £10,000, which was also included as a condition in the planning permission. Mr Allen was unaware of this but indicated that he would look into the matter and that the owners would comply with applicable conditions.

Mr Allen was asked to clarify the meaning of a lodge. He explained that this was a type of static caravan.

It was noted that a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) contribution, which would be payable on a housing development, would not arise from caravans, but there would be a resulting impact on the infrastructure of the town.

Mr Allen responded that if the Council were minded to change to residential park homes, then there would be a CIL contribution. However, as the proposed development was not classed as a residential development there would be no CIL connected to it. The occupants would not be using main facilities, such as the schools. Mr Allen noted that when the application for more lodges was submitted, this would be done by means of a Certificate of Lawfulness, rather than a planning application. There would be no option to ask for a CIL contribution.

Mr Allen was thanked for attending the meeting and for the open and frank discussion.

## 8. Minutes

- a. The minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2020 were considered for approval. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 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 28<sup>th</sup> July 2020 be ADOPTED.**
- c. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that the minutes of the Finance, Asset Management & HR Committee meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> July 2020 be ADOPTED.**

## 9. Town Clerk's Report

Members received a written report from the Town Clerk on outstanding matters and action taken since the last Council meeting.

**NOTED.**

## 10. Communications and Media Policy

Members reviewed the revised Communications and Media Policy. Some concern was expressed that the use of social media could result in enquiries and exchanges bypassing the official channel of the Council office. However, the use of social media could bring the activities of the Council to a wider audience and encourage engagement from the public. It was important that views expressed by Councillors on social media reflected Council policy.

Following correction of a typographical error, **it was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to approve the Communications and Media Policy.**

## 11. Website Accessibility

- a. Members noted that new regulations regarding website accessibility came into effect for local council websites from 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2020 (The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) Accessibility Regulations 2018).
- b. Members considered the action plan drawn up for the Council. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to approve the action plan and a budget of £149, if required.**

## 12. Reinvigoration of Much Wenlock Town Centre

Members noted a report from the working group. There were three strands to the project supported by the Small Market Town Support Fund grant: new signposting to draw people into town, a short series of promotional videos and business training. The first training session had been held earlier in the week and two more sessions were planned. Feedback had been very positive and traders or local organisations who would like to take part were encouraged to get in touch.

The working group was thanked for their work.

**NOTED**

## 13. 10 High Street

Members noted a report on 10 High Street from the working group. Residents were being consulted on the future use of the premises with a deadline of 31<sup>st</sup> October. Councillors were also encouraged to put forward views.

The Clerk was working with the agent on maintenance of the flat above 10 High Street. The decoration and repair of the front of the premises was under way. Members of the working group had recently surveyed 10 High Street and the Council offices internally to compare available floor space.

**NOTED**

## 14. Working Group Reports

Members noted reports from the following working groups:

a. **Friends of the Cemetery**

Councillors Jenkins and Hill had trimmed branches overhanging the car park to allow easier access for vehicles. Volunteers had also removed ash saplings, which had established on graves and in borders. The Council had been asked by the Tree Officer at Shropshire Council to note any ash trees on Council grounds, to inform measures for ash dieback. The grass circles had recently been machine cut as it had not been possible for the group 'Caring for God's Acre' to scythe the grass this year.

b. **History**

Thanks were expressed to the volunteer archivist, who was responding to requests received for information. The archives were being maintained in a satisfactory condition. The group was attempting to develop a new project to document the 2020 pandemic in Much Wenlock and contributions of photographs and information were being requested from residents.

A query was raised about the accessibility of the archives, how this could be improved and whether more could be put on display in the Guildhall

c. **Communications, Markets and Tourism**

Members of this working group were currently engaged with the Covid-19 Small Market Town support project.

d. **Housing Needs**

It was noted that one of the aims of the Housing Needs working group was to help to meet the aspirations of young people who had a desire to purchase a house rather than rent social housing. The Town Council had hoped that Much Wenlock could be a front runner for Shropshire Council's new housing company, Cornovii Developments Ltd, however, the land needed to be owned by Shropshire Council in order to move forward quickly.

To enable progress to be made, the working group needed to identify more people who could be interested in purchasing their own properties and to involve local people. There had been a disappointing response to previous requests for local people to come forward.

e. **Grounds Maintenance and Property Maintenance**

It was noted that the Council was very aware of the cost implications of maintenance work and there were sometimes delays while cost effective solutions to problems were investigated. The Council had recently renewed the cleaning and maintenance contract for Queen Street and St Mary's car park toilets. Councillors were exploring ways to reduce costs but keep the facilities operational. These might include reconfiguring the Queen Street toilets. The automatic facilities in St Mary's car park were more expensive to maintain and would be more expensive to reconfigure.

Quotations were being sought for work to the lychgate and chapel at the Cemetery and the bus shelter in Queen Street had recently been repainted. The Council was considering options to deal with the pigeons on the Guildhall.

## 15. Highways Matters

Members considered traffic problems in the town centre and whether to request that Shropshire Council trial a one-way system for the town centre and/or the closure of Wilmore Street to vehicles.

Members noted that the issues were complex as the introduction of restrictions could move traffic and increase problems in other locations, such as the Gaskell corner and the back streets. Members noted the impact of the closure of Wilmore Street during the gas works. It was important that access was retained for residents.

Possible measures could be extreme traffic calming, such as a 5mph speed limit with pedestrian priority. It was noted that safety was an important consideration, especially for pedestrians.

Several members suggested that a bypass for the town might be the only long term solution.

It was agreed that evidence was needed to inform consideration of possible improvement measures.

**It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to set up a working group comprising Councillors and members of the public to gather evidence and explore options for improvement of the town centre highways.**

## 16. Remembrance Day

Members noted that given the current Covid-19 restrictions, it would not be possible to hold the usual Remembrance Day service under the Corn Exchange on Wednesday, 11<sup>th</sup> November 2020.

It was noted that Holy Trinity Church would be holding an outdoor service on the Church Green on Remembrance Sunday and that the Town Council had organised a road closure to ensure sufficient space for social distancing.

**17. Christmas Lights**

- a. Members noted that anchor bolt testing would take place on Sunday, 25<sup>th</sup> October and the Christmas lights would be installed on Sunday, 15<sup>th</sup> November 2020. Town centre road closures would be in place on these dates.

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

- b. Members considered the date and arrangements for switching on the Christmas lights. The restrictions in place would make it extremely difficult to hold an organised event.

**It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to support late night shopping on Thursday, 19<sup>th</sup> November and to switch on the lights on that date.**

The Christmas Fayre Committee would be asked if they could organise some background music to add to the atmosphere.

**18. Recording of Meetings held Remotely**

Members considered whether to record meetings held remotely by video conference and whether to make such recordings public. This would allow more people to view the proceedings and provide wider engagement from members of the public.

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

It was stated that if a recording were made public as a matter of course, it would be necessary to make that clear to all members of the public who spoke at a meeting, prior to them speaking. It was thought that this might discourage members of the public from speaking.

**It was RESOLVED to reinvoke standing orders.**

Concerns were expressed about privacy and the use of YouTube as a platform. It was also noted that the minutes were not a verbatim record of the meeting.

**It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to continue to record full Town Council meetings and to upload the recordings to relevant platforms, as appropriate.**

**19. Consultation**

Councillors considered a response to the following consultation:

- a. Shropshire Council’s Leisure Facilities Strategy, open until 27<sup>th</sup> October 2020.  
**It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that the Mayor and Councillors Hill and N Park should draft a response.**

**20. Correspondence**

Members received and noted the following, which had been emailed to Members:

- 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. Rural Bulletins
- e. Community Reassurance update from Shropshire Council, dated 23.09
- f. Connecting Shropshire programme update September 2020

**21. Agenda items for next town council meeting**

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

- Progress report on initial highways discussions

**22. Date of next meeting**

Members noted that the next meeting was scheduled to take place on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2020.

The meeting closed at 9.40pm

Signed .....  
Town Mayor

Date .....