

MUCH WENLOCK TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
held remotely by video conference
at 7 pm on Thursday, 15th April 2021

Present: Cllr. Mary Hill, Cllr. Yvonne Holyoak, Cllr. Dafydd Jenkins, Cllr. Natalie Park, Cllr. Matthew 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: Shropshire Councillor David Turner, PC Jess Hindley and several members of the public.

1. Chairman's Welcome

The Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting.

He expressed the Council's great sadness at the death of HRH, The Duke of Edinburgh, and offered the Council's sympathy to the Queen and the Royal Family. He advised that there would be an online book of condolence but no physical books of condolence, in accordance with the wishes of the Royal Family and public health advice. The Mayor outlined the funeral arrangements for the Duke. He noted that the flag on the Guildhall was flying at half-mast, in line with protocol. The Mayor would be attending the Evening Vigil service at Holy Trinity Church on Friday evening.

The meeting observed a minute's Silence.

The Mayor reported that the town was now beginning to open up and the Council would be installing new signage on the main roads to encourage visitors into the town.

He advised of the recent death of Gerry Bowden, a former Mayor and energetic Town Councillor. The funeral would take place on 21st April, and the funeral cortege would pass through the High street at approximately 11.45 am. The Mayor noted that this was the last full meeting of the current Council and that many longstanding Councillors, and the Shropshire Councillor, would be stepping down. It had been a true honour to serve among Councillors who had given such service to the town. The Mayor was delighted to report that, at the extraordinary meeting held just prior to the current meeting, the Council had resolved to appoint Milner Whiteman a Freeman of the Town.

2. Apologies

It was RESOLVED to accept the following apologies: Councillor Herbert Harper – technical issues

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.

He advised that he would not be standing for election in Much Wenlock again and thanked the Town Council for accommodating him over the last eight years. He wished all well for future.

Councillor Turner was asked to prompt a response from Shropshire Council officers following the transport meeting held in March.

Councillor Turner was thanked for his contribution.

6. Police Report

a. Members noted the letter of introduction from Sgt Kate Oen.

- b. The Mayor welcomed PC Jess Hindley to the meeting. PC Hindley thanked Councillors for their support in her role. She advised that the police would be holding a drop-in session on the coming Saturday between 10 am and 12 noon in Much Wenlock town centre. Due to the location, it would not be possible to hold confidential discussions.

PC Hindley was thanked for her attendance and report.

7. Public session

Revd Stafford offered prayers.

8. Minutes

- a. The minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 4th March 2021 were considered for approval.
It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 4th March 2021 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 2nd February 2021 be ADOPTED.**
- c. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that the minutes of the Finance, Asset Management & HR Committee meeting held on 26th January 2021 be ADOPTED.**

9. Town Clerk's Report

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

10. Bank Account Signatories

On the recommendation of the Finance, Asset Management & HR Committee, **it was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to remove outgoing Councillors from the bank mandate and to add new signatories and online authorisers.**

11. Annual Town Council Meeting

- a. Members noted that the legislation permitting Council meetings to be held remotely would expire on 6th May 2021.
- b. Members considered arrangements for holding the Annual Town Council meeting in May, which would have to be a face-to-face meeting with appropriate social distancing and other safety measures in place.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to cancel the Mayor Making scheduled for 13th May and to hold the Annual Town Council meeting on 20th May in the Priory Hall.

It was noted that remote meetings had increased engagement from the public and that continued remote access to meetings would be a benefit, even if meetings were held in person.

12. Review of Policies

- a. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to suspend standing order 5j to allow the following polices to be reviewed and adopted at this meeting, rather than at the Annual Town Council meeting.**
- b. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to approve and adopt the following revised policies and procedures:**
- i. Standing Orders
 - ii. Financial Regulations
 - iii. Complaints Procedure
 - iv. Publication Scheme
 - v. Communications and Media Policy

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to reinvoke Standing Orders.

13. Much Wenlock Forester Charitable Trust

- a. Members noted that the Town Council was entitled to nominate one Trustee to the Much Wenlock Forester Charitable Trust, for a term of four years.
- b. Members noted that the term of the current Trustee, Mr Mark Laws, would expire on 2nd May 2021.
It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to nominate Mr Laws as the Town Council's Trustee for a further four-year term.

14. Ironbridge Power Station

Members noted that consideration of the application for the Ironbridge Power Station by Shropshire Council's Planning Committee had been deferred from 23rd March 2021 until a later date.

15. Working Group Reports

Members noted reports from the following working groups:

a. Friends of the Cemetery

Councillor Hill reported that the group had prepared the memorial flower bed for Suzanne Boulos and planted three roses, of local or other relevance: Charles Darwin, the Mayflower and The Lady Gardener. The rest of the bed would be filled with perennials. The Tree Forum had planted a lilac alongside the flower bed. The bench would be installed opposite the flower bed in June.

There were differing views about whether to remove the Ivy growing on the wall between the old and new cemetery, which some considered was damaging the wall. Councillor Hill would keep the Council informed. The group was keen to welcome more volunteers to help with their work.

b. History

Councillor Hill reported that the group had not met due to Covid and the volunteer archivist had not been coming into the office due to the restrictions in place.

The 'Covid Chronicles' would be going to the typesetter the following week with the aim of going to print at the end of May. The book launch was planned for Saturday, 3rd July from 10am in The Square. This had been a wonderful project, with a great variety of contributions.

c. Communications, Markets & Tourism

Councillor Themans reported on the Market Towns grant, which the Council had received to support the regeneration of the town. The grant had been awarded last summer but due to the return of restrictions, some elements had been put on hold. Successful business training had been carried out and promotional videos had been produced, which had recently been re-launched. With the relaxation of restrictions, the new signs to encourage people into the town could now be installed. For the rest of April Shropshire Council was providing free car parking across the county, including Much Wenlock, to support retailers.

Members wished to encourage local businesses, such as hotels, to incorporate the videos into their websites. The Clerk was asked to liaise with P Hutchinson of Virtual Shropshire.

d. Housing Needs

The Mayor reported that it had been difficult for the group to move forward over the last year. The construction of 14 affordable homes at Callaughtons Ash had been approved by Shropshire Council this week. The developer was working with Shropshire Council to resolve concerns about the drainage. The existing development at Callaughtons Ash had provided homes for people with connections to Much Wenlock.

Councillor Jenkins raised concerns about the qualifying criteria for such housing and urged the Council to rigorously support a *current* connection with Much Wenlock, not a distant or historic family connection.

e. 10 High Street

Councillor White advised that the coronavirus restrictions had prevented the group from visiting projects in other areas and there had been no recent meeting.

f. Grounds Maintenance & Property Maintenance

Councillor Jenkins reported that there had been no recent activity, but the group had previously carried out a site visit to the Queen Street toilets. The facilities were essential but needed updating and a unisex toilet might be considered. It was acknowledged that the cleaning and maintenance costs were high, but so far it had not been possible to find an alternative to the current arrangement.

16. Transport Matters

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to suspend Standing Orders to receive a report from Mr P Hanafin on the meeting with Shropshire Council officers held on 15th March 2021 to consider transport issues at the Gaskell corner.

Shropshire Council had advised that they were still in negotiation with the Power Station developer regarding the impact of the development and that Highways England had withdrawn their objection to the scheme, subject to technical agreement. The developer had agreed to provide a sum of money to fund a study into the future traffic situation in Much Wenlock and to provide the financial equivalent of a highway improvement scheme, which had been rejected by Shropshire Council on technical grounds. The Town Council's objections to the scheme were outlined: that the impact on the Gaskell corner and the rest of the town had not been resolved and that the developer

had used an inappropriate traffic model for the assessment. The Town Council welcomed the financing of a traffic study but pressed for the developer to produce a design for an upgrade of the junction that would actually work, and to base the financial contribution on *that* scheme.

The Town Council strongly criticised the developer's approach to testing the junction and identified sections of the developer's highways report that were wrong and unacceptable. Shropshire Council had not yet read the objections submitted by the Town Council. It was pointed out that the long-term solution to the town's traffic problems was potentially a bypass, but the meeting was not the correct forum to address that issue. The Town Council emphasised that Shropshire Council should review their highways objections to the Power Station development.

On other matters, an update was requested on the Much Wenlock Draft Traffic Orders prepared before the March 2020 Covid lockdown. These plans would be reviewed and updated, if necessary, prior to circulation and then formal consultation with the public.

Mr Hanafin was thanked for the report.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to reinvoke Standing Orders.

17. Shropshire Association of Local Councils

- a. Members noted information regarding the SALC Joint Working Group (formerly CIL/SALC Working Group).
- b. Councillor Holyoak provided a verbal report on the meeting of the Bridgnorth & Shifnal Area Committee held on 22nd March 2021. It had been advised that no fees would be collected for 2021/22 due to lack of activities. The guest speaker had been Allan Wilson, Vice President of SALC, who had given a presentation on climate change, similar to that given recently to the Town Council. An update on Shropshire Council's boundary review had been provided at the meeting. Parish and Town Councils had been encouraged to contact the Chairman of SALC if they were experiencing a lack of support from Shropshire Council, as the SALC Executive met monthly with Shropshire Council and could pass on complaints. SALC area meetings had been poorly attended recently and councils were asked for increased support. The SALC AGM would be held on 14th June.

Councillor Holyoak was thanked for her report, which was **NOTED**.

18. Consultation

Members considered a response to the following consultation: Shropshire Council's Great Outdoors Annual Public Survey 2020-2021 (open 12th March to 30th May 2021). Individual Councillors were encouraged to submit their comments. Councillor White indicated his willingness to respond. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that Councillor White should respond.**

19. Correspondence

Members **NOTED** the following, which had been emailed to Members:

- a. SALC information bulletin and other information
- b. Shropshire Council Press Releases
- c. Rural Bulletins
- d. Armed Forces Outreach Support Updates 18.03.21
- e. Notes from meeting of the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership held on 9th March 2021
- f. Information on the 2021 Census and follow up.
- g. Year-end message from the High Sheriff of Shropshire, Mrs Dean Harris JP, and announcement that her successor, Mr Tony Morris-Eyton, takes office on 9th April 2021.
- h. Announcement of the new Shropshire's Outstanding Community award.

20. Agenda items for next town council meeting

Members were invited to suggest items for inclusion on the agenda for the next meeting. Members highlighted the need for the new Council to draw up a strategic plan prioritising projects and costs for the next 5 years.

21. Date of next meeting

Members noted that the Annual Town Council meeting would be held on 20th May at 7.00pm at the Priory Hall.

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.

22. Guildhall Custodian

The interview panel gave a verbal report on the recruitment process and the outcome of recent interviews for the post of Guildhall Custodian.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to approve the appointment of the selected candidate as Custodian for the Guildhall.

23. Guildhall Cupola

Members reviewed quotations for the renovation of the Guildhall cupola. It was noted that an application for Listed Building Consent would be required before the work could be carried out.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to award the contract to Croft Building & Conservation Ltd as per their quotation dated 23rd March 2021.

24. Pigeon Proofing for Guildhall

Members considered the report on further pigeon proofing for the Guildhall.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to contract Acute Pest Control to undertake further works in accordance with the report prepared by the RFO.

The meeting closed at 8.40pm

Signed
Town Mayor

Date