

MUCH WENLOCK TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
held at Much Wenlock Primary School
at 7 pm on Thursday, 3rd June 2021

Present: Cllr. Michael Atherton, Cllr. David Fenwick, Cllr. Michael Grace, Cllr. Samuel Neal, Cllr. John O'Dowd, Cllr. Marcus Themans, Cllr. Daniel Thomas (in the chair), Cllr. Christopher Tyler, Cllr. Duncan White.

Town Clerk: Trudi Barrett

In attendance: Several members of the public.

1. Chairman's Welcome

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting, extending special thanks to Much Wenlock Primary School and Headteacher, Carl Litchfield, for use of the premises.

He was pleased to see Much Wenlock opening up and hoped that the new signage and excellent promotional video would bring more people into the town. The Guildhall was again open to the public, including art exhibitions within the building, currently from Wenlock Artists.

The Mayor noted that, following a request from the Town Council, Shropshire Council had commissioned signage warning of the concealed entrance to the cemetery and allotments on Bridgnorth Road. In his role as Shropshire Councillor, the Mayor had also given this his support, to ensure its prioritisation.

Finally, the Mayor advised that free Covid lateral flow tests were available from Much Wenlock Library, for those who required them. Government advice was to conduct a test twice a week and he encouraged residents to make use of the test kits.

2. Apologies for Absence

It was RESOLVED to accept the following apologies: Councillors Wilfred Grainger and Robert Toft, who were on holiday.

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 items 9a and 9b as members of his family are local landowners.

4. Dispensations

None requested.

5. Shropshire Council Report

Shropshire Councillor Daniel Thomas gave a verbal report:

He was pleased to see the social distancing bollards outside the George and Dragon had been removed after a request from the Town Council and himself, as the local member, following an unfortunate incident the previous week, which had resulted in a member of the public going to hospital. The potential hazard had been removed, giving easier access to the High Street.

The Ironbridge Power Station applications, both for the housing units and the sand and gravel extraction, would be heard by the South Planning Committee on 15th June at Theatre Severn, where Councillor Thomas would speak as the neighbouring local member. The effect on Much Wenlock could be very serious and he would be keen to stress this at that meeting. He had requested that the Town Council also be given a slot to speak but it was unclear how many spaces there would be both for members of the public and organisations to speak.

Councillor Thomas was looking forward to his first meetings on the Housing Supervisory Board and the Health & Adult Social Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee, to improve services and housing provision locally.

Finally, he was pleased to report that he had held a private meeting with the new Leader of Shropshire Council, Lezley Picton, to discuss a range of local issues, especially the Local Plan, and he was hopeful of seeing improvements where possible.

6. Public Session

Mr Paul Hanafin provided an update on the planning applications for Ironbridge Power Station. He noted that the previous Town Council had lodged transport based objections, and that the objections had again been put to Shropshire Council highways officers at the meeting held on 15th March to discuss concerns about the Gaskell corner. Since that meeting, nothing further had been heard from the Shropshire Council officers. Despite the developer's own analysis of the problems at the Gaskell corner, no appropriate improvements had been proposed.

The planning applications would be considered by Shropshire Council on 15th June and Mr Hanafin urged the Council to action:

1. For our Shropshire Councillor to demand a response from the officers who attended the meeting on 15th March
2. To delegate to the Transport Working Group the preparation a press statement outlining the Council's concerns and objections.
3. To meet the press and local residents to the Gaskell corner to demonstrate the reasons for the objections.
4. For the Mayor to write to all members of the Shropshire Council Planning Committee, providing a copy of the Town Council's objections and the impact of the development on the people and environment of Much Wenlock.
5. To organise a demonstration outside the Shropshire Council Planning Committee meeting and to get objectors into the committee room, making sure the press is aware.
6. For our Shropshire Councillor to make a strongly worded speech at the meeting.

As Shropshire Councillor, Cllr Thomas undertook to follow up a response from the Highways officers and to make sure that Shropshire Council officers had seen the Town Council objections.

Mr Hanafin advised that the developer had agreed, via a S106 agreement, to provide money to carry out an area wide transport study, which would show what the impact would be on Much Wenlock of developments at Buildwas, Tasley and others nearby. However, this would come after the decision had been taken on the Power Station development.

It was noted that the Town Council had no statutory power as an objector. It might be too late to have the application 'called in', for a public enquiry and for the Secretary of State to decide on the application. This would require help from the local MPs.

Mr Hanafin was thanked for his contribution, which would be considered further under agenda item 9b.

7. Minutes

- a. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to approve and adopt the minutes of the extraordinary Town Council meeting held on 15th April 2021.**
- b. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to approve and adopt the minutes of the Annual Town Council meeting held on 20th May 2021.**

8. Town Clerk's Report

Members **NOTED** the written report from the Town Clerk on outstanding matters and action taken since the last Council meeting. The Clerk reported that the internal audit had been carried out on 1st June and no concerns had been raised verbally.

Having declared a pecuniary interest in the following agenda items, Cllr Daniel Thomas left the meeting and Cllr Duncan White took the chair.

9. Shropshire Council Local Plan 2016 – 2038 and Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Development Plan

- a. Councillor Mike Grace provided an introduction to his report, which gave an overview of the Local Plan process and how this had been carried out in Shropshire, as well as the required connection with the Neighbourhood Development Plan. He considered that the Local Plan ignored elements of the Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Development Plan with regard to the scale and size of development. He noted that many of the new Councillors had stood on a platform of revisiting the Town Council's response to the Local Plan and reviewing the Neighbourhood Development Plan.

Councillor Grace noted that once Shropshire Council had set an indicative target for development, the Neighbourhood Development Plan would have to be in broad conformity with this to meet development needs. The report did not propose discounting any development sites at this stage, but discussing these within the community.

Members queried the process and cost of a review of the Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Development Plan. It was noted that the Plan did not have to be reviewed but would become out of date if it was not reviewed. The Plan needed to be in conformity with the county Plan and with national guidance. A review would need to be undertaken by the qualifying body, the Town Council, following the process set out in legislation. It was noted that the average cost to create a Plan was £7 - £10,000. Grants were available for reviewing Neighbourhood Development Plans through 'Locality', with additional funding available for specific elements, so it might not cost the local taxpayer anything. While minor changes could be made in agreement with Shropshire Council, more significant changes would require a formal review. The current Plan had taken around 18 months to produce and the timescale for a review would depend on access to funding and the level of change required.

- b. Members considered the recommendations contained within the report. The Planning & Environment Committee had resolved to support the recommendations.

It was noted that the draft Local Plan would be considered at the Shropshire Council meeting scheduled for 8th July, when it would be put forward for approval for submission to the Planning Inspectorate. Prior to that, the draft Plan could be amended by Shropshire Council.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and unanimously RESOLVED to approve the recommendations contained in the report and additional recommendations, as follows:

- 1. That the Town Council reconsiders its previous decisions to support Shropshire Council's proposals for Much Wenlock in the Draft Local Plan.**
- 2. That the Town Council asks:**
 - a. Shropshire Council to change the Draft Local Plan and remove the allocation of the proposed site MUW012VAR.**
 - b. Shropshire Council to commit to providing an indicative housing target for the town (until 2038) in the Draft Local Plan that is submitted for Examination in Public.**
 - c. Shropshire Council to agree that the best planning solutions for development in the town should be through a formal review of the Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan.**
 - d. That Shropshire Council now meaningfully engages with the Town Council and its community to undertake the review of the Neighbourhood Plan.**
- 3. That the Town Council agrees to the Town Clerk exploring the options for grants and funding for undertaking a review of the Neighbourhood Plan including delivery of development to meet local needs such as affordable housing.**
- 4. To request a response to the Council's letter to Shropshire Council regarding the above within 10 working days and that a meeting be arranged to discuss the above as soon as possible.**
- 5. To include in the letter the Council's concerns about the applications for Ironbridge Power Station and the impact on Much Wenlock.**

With regard to the applications for Ironbridge Power Station (a strategic site in the Local Plan) **it was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to write a separate letter to Shropshire Council re-iterating objections to the development at Ironbridge Power Station, including the concerns about transport matters, and highlighting the need for strategic issues to be resolved before determination of the applications.**

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to write to Philip Dunne MP to express the Council's great concern about the Power Station applications and the impact of traffic arising from the proposed development on Much Wenlock and to request that the application be called in, copying the letter to Shropshire Council.

Councillors were supportive of the actions proposed by Mr Hanafin in public session. Concerns were expressed about direct action from the Council as a corporate body, although Councillors were free to act as individuals. It was noted that a large volume of letters from members of the public could have a significant impact and that individuals could also submit press releases and take action.

Councillor Thomas returned to the meeting and took the chair.

10. Police Matters

- a. It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** to note the **Local Policing Community Charter from West Mercia Police**.
- b. Members considered the request from the local policing team for the Town Council to identify its top three concerns for the area as part of the consultation required to form an effective contract with the Town Council as outlined in the Charter.

Following discussion, it was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** to forward the following three priorities to the local policing team:

1. **Thefts of vehicles and machinery from gardens and outbuildings, particularly in rural areas.**
2. **Anti-social behaviour, including drug taking and drug dealing in the town centre.**
3. **Speeding on rural roads and large vehicles ignoring weight limits.**

It was noted that the local policing team were carrying out regular patrols in areas where anti-social behaviour had been highlighted.

Councillors raised ideas such as a community What's App group to alert residents to criminal activities, a policing Facebook page and increased use of Smartwater. It was noted that crimes should be reported to 101 or 999, as appropriate.

11. School Traffic Surveys

Members noted correspondence from Shropshire Council regarding school traffic surveys and development of a programme for introducing 20mph speed restrictions outside schools.

A monitor had been observed outside William Brookes School and data would be gathered from 7th June. It was noted that previous requests for 20mph speed limits outside both schools had been refused due to the low accident rate. Councillors raised the need for 20mph speed limits on routes to school, as well as outside schools.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to fully support the programme to introduce 20mph speed restrictions outside schools, to request sight of the relevant data when ready, and to request that traffic on the A458 be monitored in addition to traffic outside the primary school on Racecourse Lane.

12. Correspondence

Members **NOTED** the following:

- a. SALC information bulletin and other information.
- b. Shropshire Hills AONB newsletter.

13. Agenda Items for Next Town Council Meeting

Members suggested the following items for inclusion on the agenda for the next meeting on 24th June:

Consideration of any response from Shropshire Council to correspondence regarding the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Development Plan.

The outcome of consideration of the Ironbridge Power Station planning applications at the Shropshire Council meeting on 15th June.

14. Date of next meeting

Members noted that the next meeting would be held at 7.00pm on Thursday, 24th June at the Guildhall, restrictions permitting.

Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960

Pursuant to Section 1(2) of the above Act it was be **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** that, due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, the public and press should not be present.

15. Arrangements for Guildhall and Corn Exchange Cleaning

Members noted the confidential report prepared by the Town Clerk.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED

- a. To set the cleaning hours for the Guildhall at 24 per month, April to October, and 6 per month, November to March. To retain the hours for the Corn Exchange at 3 per week.
- b. To recruit a directly employed cleaner.
- c. To maintain the current rate of pay, to be reviewed if necessary.
- d. To set up a recruitment panel comprising Councillor White, the Clerk and RFO.
- e. To delegate authority to the Town Clerk to make the necessary arrangements, including any alternative staffing arrangements necessary.

The meeting closed at 8.35pm

Signed
Town Mayor

Date