

MUCH WENLOCK TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
held at The Guildhall, Much Wenlock
at 7 pm on Thursday, 9th June 2022

Present: Councillors William Benbow, David Fenwick, Mike Grace, Wilfred Grainger, John O’Dowd, Marcus Themans, Daniel Thomas, Chris Tyler, Linda West, Duncan White (in the chair)

Town Clerk: Trudi Barrett

There was one member of the public attending the meeting remotely.

1. Chairman’s Welcome

The Mayor presented the following report:

Since the last meeting I have attended the Mayor Making ceremonies for Bridgnorth, Telford & Wrekin and Ludlow. I also attended the Lord Lieutenant’s Garden Party at Orleton Hall to celebrate the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee and to thank volunteers for their hard work in recent times supporting their communities around the county.

There have been many events held around the town to celebrate the Queen’s Jubilee, including some street parties and gatherings. We have also been involved in organising the Beacon lighting event at the Priory with Much Wenlock Church, English Heritage and Wenlock Estates, which was attended by an estimated 250 residents. Special thanks go to Reverend Matthew Stafford, Hannah at English Heritage, the Councillors who acted as stewards and Councillor Daniel Thomas and father for arranging and lighting the beacon itself.

We also joined with Holy Trinity Church in sharing the cost of the lighting up of the church tower with commemorative images for the Jubilee weekend. I would like to thank those traders who also contributed to the decoration of the High Street to help celebrate the Jubilee.

Since the weekend, the fantastic Much Wenlock Festival has been welcomed back to the church green and has attracted many visitors to the varied entertainment. It was great to see this festival back after a few years absence due to the pandemic. If you haven’t been, then I would strongly recommend it and a big thanks goes to everyone who helps to put on this event every two years.

We held a feedback session with traders and residents following the first ‘Made in Shropshire’ market, which attracted many new visitors to the town and we look forward to the next market on 18th June.

A huge amount of work has been going on to prepare and submit papers for the upcoming Examination in Public of the Local Plan, the result of which is a very professional and comprehensive submission to represent the Council and the people of the town. It has been an excellent example of collaboration and co-operation and I would like to thank Councillor Mike Grace in particular for all his endeavour on everyone’s behalf. We look forward to a positive experience.

I have been very pleased to see the start of growth of the Wildflower meadow on the Gaskell Field, which we hope will flourish and be eye catching in a few years’ time. It’s something we can all enjoy and look forward to.

2. Apologies for Absence

It was RESOLVED to accept the following apology: Councillor Christian Toon – other engagement

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. Public Session

There were no members of the public present.

6. Policing

- a. Members noted with thanks the written police report provided. The Clerk was asked to check which telephone box had been used to make the false 999 call and whether officers were deployed to check suspicious activity when this was reported.
- b. Members noted the minutes of a Local Policing Charter Councillor Meeting held on 25th April 2022, which had been attended by the Mayor. The Mayor gave an overview of matters covered during the meeting and suggested that a different Councillor could attend the next meeting.

7. Shropshire Council Report

Shropshire Councillor, Daniel Thomas, presented the following report:

Road Repairs

Shropshire Council are continuing their work in repairing our roads, with more work outlined in Much Wenlock, including Barrow Street, where they will close the road on the 25th of July. On 26th and 27th of June we also have road closures coming on Bridgnorth Road so that Cadent can do some remedial works. As well as tonight! Where Severn Trent have dug up the High street due to a burst water main.

Bus Service

Shropshire Council has set up an All-Party Working Group on Public Transport help us reshape our public transport offer post-Covid. It will look at making improvements to the service for all residents.

Ukraine

Much Wenlock Division now has 9 Ukrainian Refugees; for those who are able, there is still time to get set up and take some more.

Housing Needs Survey

This week some of you will have had a questionnaire through your door - almost 20,000 randomly selected residents across Shropshire are being urged to complete a questionnaire to help understand the housing needs across the county. This includes helping establish and understand the condition of existing private and social housing stock and the need for additional open market and affordable housing as well as what the types of new homes that are required for Shropshire's existing and future households. I urge everyone who has received this letter to take part in the survey and support this important work - I think the Town Council will find the results extremely useful.

Local Plan

I note that the Planning Inspectors have asked a tough question to Shropshire Council regarding community consultation or rather lack of, and we'll await the response Eddie West and his team come back with, but I am sure this Council will use this to their advantage at the EIP. Secondly, I found out just today that Shropshire Council are considering seeking authority to run a public consultation on a draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site (WHS), which is being prepared jointly with Telford and Wrekin Council. The aim of the SPD is to provide guidance for residents, businesses and organisations that intend to submit planning applications within the WHS and its setting, and to assist both authorities to make consistent planning decisions that preserve and enhance its heritage significance.

Surgery

The next Council surgery will be held this coming Saturday, 11th June between 10.30 am and 12 noon at the museum – no appointment necessary. I'll be joined by Cllr John O'Dowd and a representative from the Police.

With regard to the housing survey, Councillor Thomas was asked how many dwellings there were in Shropshire. He did not have the figure to hand but advised that there were around 300,000 residents. It was observed that, as a percentage, 20,000 questionnaires seemed a small number on which to base decisions.

8. Minutes

- a. **It was RESOLVED to approve and adopt the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 12th May 2022.**
- b. **It was RESOLVED to adopt the minutes of the Finance & Asset Management Committee meeting held on 22nd March 2022.** An error was noted in minute 18, which would be referred back to the Committee.

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. The Clerk advised that a condition survey of the chapel and lychgate had been carried out on 8th June.

10. Internal Audit Report

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the final report for the internal audit for the financial year 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022, carried out on 10th May 2022. Councillors noted the positive report and expressed their thanks to staff.

11. Annual Accounts 2021/22

- a. It was **RESOLVED** to approve income and expenditure from 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022.
- b. It was **RESOLVED** to approve the balance sheet as at 31st March 2022.
Councillors requested clarification on the way fixed assets were shown in the Council's accounts and transparency with regard to holdings and disposal. The Clerk undertook to check this with the RFO. It was noted that the Council had a separate asset register. Councillors requested further information on the allocation of the S106 reserve and any restrictions on its use.
- c. It was **RESOLVED** to approve the bank reconciliation as at 31st March 2022.

12. Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2021/2022

- a. Members noted the Annual Internal Audit Report 2021/22 forming part of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return.
- b. It was **RESOLVED** to respond positively to assertions 1 to 8 of the Annual Governance Statement, Section 1 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return.
- c. It was **RESOLVED** to approve the Accounting Statements for 2021/2022 (Section 2).
- d. It was **RESOLVED** to approve the Explanation of Variances.
- e. It was **RESOLVED** to approve the reconciliation between boxes 7 and 8 in Section 2.
- f. Members noted that the period for the exercise of public rights would run from Monday, 13th June 2021 to Friday, 22nd July 2022.

13. Shropshire Draft Local Plan (2016 - 2038) – Examination in Public

- a. It was **RESOLVED** to retrospectively approve the statements submitted to the Examination in Public on 27th May 2022. Thanks were expressed to all those who had been involved in preparing the statements, Councillors and members of the community.
- b. Members noted that the Inspectors had asked further questions of Shropshire Council, most recently about the lack of community involvement.

Members considered arrangements for the Town Council's participation in the hearings for the Local Plan. It was noted that representatives would be primarily responding to questions from the Inspectors and that names had to be confirmed to the Programme Officer by 13th June.

It was RESOLVED to agree the following representatives to attend the Local Plan hearings, beginning on 5th July, and to speak on behalf of the Town Council:

Matter 1: Cllr Mike Grace

Matter 2: Cllr Will Benbow and Mr Howard Horsley

Matters 3 and 4: Cllr Chris Tyler and Mrs Lesley Durbin

Matter 7: Cllrs Duncan White and Daniel Thomas

Matter 8: Cllr Mike Grace and Mr Jim Orves

It was noted that Mr David Turner would be speaking separately on Matter 1.

The Clerk was asked to continue to check the website for the Examination in Public website for updates. Staff were thanked for their contribution.

It was RESOLVED to prepare a public statement / press release on the Town Council's position and the Examination in Public by the end of June.

14. Review of Town Council Website

It was RESOLVED to refer a review of the website, including its objectives, to the Communications, Markets and Tourism Working Group

15. Friends of the Cemetery

Members considered a report and recommendations from the Friends of the Cemetery.

It was RESOLVED to endorse the creation of a management plan for the Old Cemetery.

It was RESOLVED to defer consideration of an annual budget to enable the management plan to be put into practice.

It was suggested that some public consultation might be undertaken once the management plan had been prepared.

16. Consultation

Members considered a response to the following consultation:

a. Shropshire Library Strategy 2022 – 2027, closing date 3rd August 2022.

Members noted that the document appeared very general in nature and lacking specifics. The strategy did not appear to cover links between libraries and communities and contained no detail regarding different locations or reference to Shropshire Council's Place Plans. Councillors felt more detail was needed on the relationship to place and community.

It was RESOLVED to request a meeting with Michael Lewis, Library Service Manager at Shropshire Council, and Cecilia Motley, Portfolio Holder for Communities, Culture, Leisure & Tourism, Transport, and to respond to the survey following the meeting.

b. Shropshire Council Draft Housing Allocations Policy, closing date 3rd July 2022.

Members considered the Draft Housing Allocations Policy. They queried the meaning of 'local' with regard to the local lettings policy and whether the new policy would give those with a very strong local connection (town/immediate area) priority. It was thought that the wording was too loose and there was not sufficient clarity on the criteria for local connection. It was noted that much of the affordable housing available was very small, and not suitable for larger families. Councillors noted that private housing suitable for older residents was often being used as holiday accommodation, putting more pressure on the remaining housing stock.

It was RESOLVED to support the Draft Housing Allocations Policy, specifically:

- **increasing the number of bands from four to seven to give greater differentiation**
 - **those with a household income of over £50,000 should not be on the register**
 - **those with savings and assets of more than £200,000 should not be on the register**
- and to request that the local connections criteria apply at local level so that people of the town or parish have priority over those from other areas wherever possible.**

17. Correspondence

Members noted the following items, which had been distributed via email between meetings:

- a. SALC information bulletins and other information
- b. NALC newsletters and other information
- c. Press releases from Shropshire Council
- d. Rural Bulletins from the Rural Services Network
- e. May 2022 Zero Carbon Shropshire Green News
- f. TREES newsletter (Together Reducing & Ending Exploitation in Shropshire) Spring Summer 2022
- g. Details of Youth Conference South Shropshire, Saturday, 25th June, 11am to 4pm
- h. Shrewsbury & Telford Hospital NHS Trust information on community membership
- i. STAR Housing news May 2022
- j. Shropshire Council survey on Shropshire's Great Outdoors.

18. Agenda items for next Town Council meeting

Members were invited to suggest items for inclusion on the agenda for the next meeting: '20s Plenty' (Cllr Chris Tyler)

19. Date of next meeting

Members noted that the next meeting would be held on Thursday, 7th July 2022 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.

20. Renovation of the Guildhall

Members considered the recommendation from the Finance & Asset Management Committee regarding the services of a consultant for fund raising and project management for the renovation of the Guildhall.

It was RESOLVED to engage the services of Greenwood Projects, on the basis of the proposed 'Route 3', at an indicative cost of £13,950 + VAT.

It was RESOLVED to use funds from the Guildhall (Fund Finder Reserve) and to make a virement of £6,278 from the Public Toilets Reserve to Property Reserves, from which the remaining balance of the fees would be financed.

21. 10 High Street

Members considered a recommendation from the Finance & Asset Management Committee on the future use of 10 High Street.

It was RESOLVED to repair the interior of 10 High Street and then to let the property on a commercial basis.

The Clerk was asked to seek quotations for repairs.

It was RESOLVED to suspend standing orders to allow the meeting to continue past 9.00 pm.

22. Legal Matter

Members considered recent correspondence regarding a legal matter.

It was RESOLVED to follow the advice provided by the Council's solicitor.

The meeting closed at 9.10 pm

Signed
Town Mayor

Date