

MUCH WENLOCK TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
held at The Guildhall, Much Wenlock
at 7 pm on Thursday, 6th April 2023

Present: Councillors William Benbow, Susan Crooke-Williams, David Fenwick, John O’Dowd, Marcus Themans, Daniel Thomas, Christian Toon, Chris Tyler, Linda West, Duncan White (in the chair).

In attendance: Trudi Barrett – Town Clerk, two members of the public in person and two remotely.

1. Chairman’s Welcome

The Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting and presented the following report:

Welcome everyone to my last full council meeting as Mayor. Of course, next month I will be handing over the chains to my Deputy, Councillor David Fenwick.

It has been a busy month again and I have great pleasure in opening the meeting by saying that the sale of the flat owned by the council at 2, Burgage Way has now been completed.

Preparations for the town’s celebration of the King’s Coronation are well underway and we all look forward to joining in the celebrations with the rest of the country on this momentous occasion. The “Picnic on the Green” will be from 2pm onwards on Sunday, 7th May on the church green and we want to decorate the town. We would love to see you all there - everyone is welcome to come along. Bring your picnic blanket, picnic tables and, if you want, bring a small gazebo and, of course, a picnic. There will be a prize for the best decorated table or gazebo. There will be entertainment, activities and refreshments on sale. I hope to see you all there.

After cancelling the first attempt at an Annual Town Meeting due to the snow, we rearranged and held the meeting on Thursday, 23rd March at the Priory Hall. It was well attended and a good, open discussion of various local topics was held.

I attended a site visit with contractors to discuss the repair works that are urgently needed to the electricity supply for the High Street. It is hoped that this will cause little disruption and will be completed as quickly as possible. Work will start later this month.

I would like to mention our support for a project proposed at The Pottery, who are applying for grant funding to offer a warm space next year and free arts experiences at their premises. I hope to be involved in this project in the future.

I was given a warm welcome at one of the Wenlock Olympian Arts Festival of Dance and Art weekends. I enjoyed watching the many performers who had travelled to William Brookes School to take part and I helped to present some of the awards.

As a council and the Gaskell Ground Management Committee, we held the formal planting of a tree as part of the Queen’s Green Canopy Project, in partnership with the GB Olympians and Wenlock Olympians. The tree was formally planted by Deputy Lord Lieutenant Claire Brentnall, who also formally opened our new entrance gates at the Gaskell Ground.

I recently attended Shrewsbury Abbey for the legal service for the High Sheriff of Shropshire, Selina Graham. This was a wonderful ceremony with a grand parade through the streets of Shrewsbury. It was attended by many dignitaries from the county and it was great to be there to represent our town.

2. Apologies for Absence

Councillor Wilfred Grainger – 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.

4. Dispensations

None requested.

5. Public Session

There had been no requests to speak.

6. Policing

Police officers had sent apologies. Members noted with thanks the written report provided.

An email had been received earlier in the day stating that due to recruitment and staffing problems it was unlikely that there would be an additional PCSO for Broseley & Much Wenlock until August. Additional cover would be provided from adjoining areas.

7. Shropshire Council Report

Shropshire Councillor, Daniel Thomas, presented the following report:

Flooding: last week, John Bellis, Shropshire Council's Drainage and Flood Risk Manager, and other Shropshire Council officers visited Hunters Gate, where we have now installed a warning gauge on the drainage system in the field. Hopefully, this gauge will give residents in Hunters Gate at least some advance warning of future flooding. Once operational, I'll update residents and the Town Council on the new flood warnings and how to access them. The tanks in the field next to Hunters Gate comprise two large chambers and a 900mm diameter pipe. Although there is some sediment in this pipe, this is not affecting its operation, and water will still flow through and be stored in this feature. Due to the size of this pipe, it may be challenging to use the jetting hose on the Council tanker to cleanse the system. I've discussed this with John, and we are looking to raise a job to cleanse the pipe and then put the system on annual maintenance. Once we have a date for these works, I will update the Council.

With regard to the proposed installation of a small weir to limit the amount of sediment entering this system, this is still something Shropshire Council is considering to limit the amount of sediment entering the network; however, if we are putting this on an annual cleanse, this may not be necessary.

The Windmill Hill: at Shropshire Council's Cabinet Meeting a couple of weeks ago, I addressed designating Windmill Hill as a Local Nature Reserve. I'm delighted to report back that Cabinet unanimously supported the decision to delegate the power to make the designation to this Town Council. As you know, the designation will help attract more visitors and funding opportunities to safeguard the future of Windmill Hill.

Gaskell Feasibility Study: the final meeting with Shropshire Council's consultants, WSP, was held on 28th March, when they broadly outlined their proposals for the junction improvement. The next stage is to await a copy of their final report, and on receipt of this document, the Council will have the opportunity to review and discuss the proposals thoroughly.

Crossing near Much Wenlock Primary School: you will know that Town Councillors and I have been pressing hard for a safer crossing of the A458 near the Primary School. At the meeting mentioned above, WSP introduced their proposed scheme, which identified a significant upgrade to a signalised crossing, similar to the one near the bus stop and Travis Perkins. I've been pressing for a 40mph speed reduction or buffer zone on the A458 before entering the 30mph zone and was delighted to see this in the design. Further work is needed on this scheme with a view to implementation during 2023/4.

Callaughtons Ash: those who have seen the advice surgery notes will know I've been pressing hard to move the 30mph zone speed limit to the other side of the Callaughtons Ash entrance. The Town Council's planning committee supported the draft plans they saw on Tuesday, so I will push hard to get the work underway immediately.

Callaughtons Ash 2 Begins: planning permission for the further 12 homes adjacent to the site has now been formally granted. Shropshire Council's officers are happy that the flooding can be resolved for the second part of the development, but this does not address the first. The build is starting this month, and we look forward to seeing it progress.

High Street Electrical Work: the High Street will be closed from Monday 17th - Sunday 30th April for the upgrading works to the town's electrical system. Instead of a 4-week closure, we have a 2-week closure, largely due to my concerns about the effect on trade and the fuss I've made to National Grid about the work, and them putting on two teams of people instead of one. The Town Council echoed these concerns, with Town Mayor Duncan White also meeting with National Grid. This means that the High Street will be open and not look like a building site for the Coronation weekend. During this road closure the digging up of the High Street will be carried out, so we may face a closure later in the year when the ducting is fed in. However, this work reduces the chances of losing power unexpectedly.

Surgery: the next Council surgery will be held on Saturday, 8th April, between 10.30 am and 12 noon at the museum. No appointment is necessary. I'll be joined by Town Councillor Chris Tyler and a representative from the Police.

Councillor Thomas was asked to press for repairs to the damaged railings on the island at the Gaskell corner. It was also stated that there was no 30mph sign on the Shrewsbury Road on the nearside as vehicles entered Much Wenlock. Councillor Thomas advised that if the faults were registered on FixMyStreet, he would follow them up. He understood that replacement railings were on order for the Gaskell corner.

Councillor Thomas was asked whether there were any plans to reinstate road markings and white line markings, especially at the Gaskell corner. He advised that this was included on the work log for this year, however, WSP proposals for the corner could change the arrangement of markings and Shropshire Council did not want to do the work twice.

8. Minutes

- a. **It was RESOLVED to approve and adopt the corrected minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 2nd March 2023.**
- b. **It was RESOLVED to adopt the minutes of the Planning & Environment Committee meeting held on 31st January 2023.**
- c. **It was RESOLVED to adopt the minutes of the Finance & Asset Management Committee meeting held on 24th January 2023.**

9. Town Clerk's Report

Members noted the written and verbal report from the Town Clerk on outstanding matters and action taken since the last Council meeting. The Clerk advised that a response had been received from Shropshire Councillor Richard Marshall regarding a 20mph speed limit for the town centre.

With regard to CCTV, Councillor Toon informed Members that he had been speaking to a supplier who had agreed to provide a quote, as well as look at funding options and a possible phased introduction.

10. Asset Register

Members reviewed the Town Council's Asset Register as at 31st March 2023. **It was RESOLVED to approve the Asset Register as at 31st March 2023.**

11. Meeting with Philip Dunne MP

Members noted that Philip Dunne MP had offered to meet Councillors to discuss local matters, provisionally on Friday, 14th April at 1.30pm. **It was RESOLVED to accept the invitation.** Councillors were asked to pass on topics for discussion to the Clerk by end of business on Tuesday, 11th April.

12. Coronation of His Majesty King Charles III

Members reviewed progress with arrangements for marking the coronation of His Majesty King Charles III in Much Wenlock. Unfortunately, it had not been possible to obtain external funding but most arrangements were now in place. Entertainment would include a choir, ukulele band, story-telling, PA with music, obstacle course and possibly a climbing wall. There would be a bar and the Women's Institute would be providing refreshments and cakes. The town and church green would be decorated and all were hoping for an enjoyable and sociable afternoon.

13. The Guildhall Renovation

Members had approved the contents of the application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF), which was ready for submission. There had been a delay in submitting the application as the NLHF website portal was closed for maintenance but it was intended to submit the application immediately after the Easter break.

14. Review of Neighbourhood Development Plan – Steering Group

Members were informed of the discussions held at the Planning & Environment Committee meeting earlier in the week. A response was awaited from Shropshire Council's Planning Policy & Strategy Manager with guidance about the review process and Councillor Thomas would press for a reply. It was noted that the review would be led by the Town Council with community involvement and, whilst the Council was keen to move forward, it was important to do so in a planned and ordered manner. The availability of funding was not known at present, as an announcement was awaited from DLUHC via Locality.

With regard to the Council's decision to undertake a review of the Neighbourhood Plan, it was noted that the Council had resolved in March 2023 to set up a steering group to begin a review of the Neighbourhood Plan and that it was implicit in this decision that a review would be undertaken.

It was thought that much of the current Plan would remain in place and that only around 20% might need updating. It was suggested that some preparatory work might be undertaken at this stage, such as monitoring and checking housing completions in recent years.

Members of the Planning & Environment Committee explained the benefits of engaging a consultant, who could act as an independent chairperson, with no personal interest or bias. It was noted that a limit of £550 per day was set on consultancy charges. Members considered a recommendation from the Planning & Environment Committee that the Council seek quotations for the provision of support from an independent consultant to guide the Neighbourhood Plan review process.

It was RESOLVED that the Council seek quotations for the provision of support from an independent consultant to guide the Neighbourhood Plan review process.

15. Neighbourhood Fund and Community Infrastructure Levy

- a. Members noted the Neighbourhood Fund payment due to Much Wenlock Town Council in 2023 and supporting information. The Clerk was asked to check how much Neighbourhood Fund the Town Council was currently holding. It was noted that funding for the crossing on the A458 would come from the CIL Local fund, held by Shropshire Council.
- b. Members noted the total Neighbourhood Fund raised by Shropshire Council between 01.02.2012 and 31.12.2022.

16. Windmill Hill – Designation as a Local Nature Reserve (LNR)

- a. Members noted that Shropshire Council's Cabinet had resolved on 22nd March 2023 to delegate power to Much Wenlock Town Council to enable the designation of Windmill Hill as a Local Nature Reserve. **It was RESOLVED to accept the delegation of the power to designate Windmill Hill a Local Nature Reserve.**
- b. **It was RESOLVED to approve the following documents: Windmill Hill LNR Boundary Plan, Windmill Hill LNR Habitat Plan, Windmill Hill LNR Habitat Management Plan** (NB. Location Plan approved at meeting on 2nd February 2023).

A query was raised about public access to the site. It was confirmed that the public footpaths were clearly marked on the LNR plans. Provision for public access would also be included in the agreement between the three parties involved. Preparation of the agreement was still in progress.

17. The Communities Prepared Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Community Emergency Planning Programme

Members considered correspondence from SALC relating to the Communities Prepared Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Community Emergency Planning Programme. **It was RESOLVED to express interest in being involved in the programme with Councillors Duncan White, Linda West, Christian Toon and Will Benbow coming forward.**

Members noted that the programme was not just about flooding, but other types of community emergency that might arise.

18. Climate and Ecology Bill

- a. Members noted correspondence from the Shropshire branch of Zero Hour, the organisers of the cross-party campaign for the Climate and Ecology Bill, currently in Parliament.
- b. Members considered a motion to support the Climate and Ecology Bill. **It was RESOLVED to:**
 1. **Support the Climate and Ecology Bill.**
 2. **Write to Philip Dunne MP letting him know that the motion has been passed and urging him to sign up to support the Bill, or thanking him for already doing so.**
 3. **Write to Zero Hour, the organisers of the cross-party campaign for the Bill, expressing support.**

19. Consultation

Members considered a response to the following consultation:

Shropshire Council consultation on Customer Service Centre opening hours – deadline for response 23rd April 2023.

Shropshire Councillor Dan Thomas explained the rationale for the proposals to reduce the Customer Service Centre telephone opening hours and to make the system more self-serving, with more online contact from members of the public.

It was RESOLVED to support Option 1, Monday to Friday, 9am to 3pm, closed Saturdays.

20. Correspondence

Members noted the following items, which had been emailed to Members:

- 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. Information from the RSN Rural Market Town Group
- f. Police Neighbourhood Matters alerts
- g. Friendly Bus Newsletter April 2023
- h. Spring edition of the Bugle, journal of The Rifles
- i. Press releases from Healthwatch Shropshire
- j. Information from Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust

21. Agenda items for next Town Council meeting

Members were invited to suggest items for inclusion on the agenda of the next meeting. It was noted that there would be a full agenda for the Annual Town Council meeting in May and that non-urgent items should wait until the following meeting.

22. Date of next meeting

Members noted that the next meeting would be Mayor Making on Thursday, 4th May 2023 at 7.00pm at the Guildhall. All other business of the Annual Town Council meeting would be deferred to the reconvened meeting on Thursday, 11th May 2023.

Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960

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

23. 2 Burgage Way

Members were pleased to note that the sale of 2 Burgage Way had been completed.

24. 10 High Street

Members considered quotations for refurbishment of 10 High Street.

It was RESOLVED to award the contract for refurbishment of 10 High Street to KL Complete Building Solutions. It was RESOLVED to allow a total budget of up to £7,000, including a contingency to cover unplanned costs.

The meeting closed at 8.25 pm.

Signed Town Mayor Date