

# MUCH WENLOCK TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the  
**TOWN COUNCIL MEETING**  
held at The Guildhall, Much Wenlock  
at 7 pm on Thursday, 8<sup>th</sup> June 2023

**Present:** Councillors Susan Crooke-Williams, David Fenwick (in the Chair), Marcus Themans, Daniel Thomas, Christian Toon, Linda West.

**In attendance:** Trudi Barrett – Town Clerk, PCSO Mal Goddard, one member of the public remotely.

## 1. Chairman's Welcome

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

“The early weeks of my Mayor’s year have been busy with invitations coming in regularly. I attended the Shrewsbury Civic Service at St Chad’s Church, which was an interesting and moving experience, processing with various Mayors, old and current, along with Freeman of the town. In the afternoon of the same day I had been invited to the Bowling Club’s open day at the top of the Gaskell Field and I spoke to them about the health benefits of their sport, as espoused by William Penny Brookes himself, as well as brushing up on my bowling skills.

I also attended the Mayor Making ceremony at Bridgnorth Council’s wonderful town hall in the centre of their High Street. The event was a little more light-hearted than ours here in Much Wenlock but nonetheless conducted with due reverence.

Our wonderful First Responders gave a demonstration of their vitally important skills at the Priory Hall and those present, including the Mayor, were encouraged to practise on the dummies provided.

The town has had another film crew filming at William Penny Brookes’ house and on the Gaskell Field recently, on an industrial history of the area subject, I believe.

I supported the Severn Hospice charity event at a lovely garden in Walton Hills and assisted our County Councillor at his monthly surgery.

Of great interest to the town, and the Planning Committee especially, was the raising of the canopy at the Wheatland Garage by four large cranes. An interesting feat of engineering it certainly was. This had been the subject of a planning application and approval some time ago.

There is an excellent exhibition of paintings by local artists in the courtroom next door and I’m sure many of you will have seen the display of wild flowers at the top of the Gaskell Field.

A date for your diaries Councillors: the Civic Service is now booked as the morning service on Sunday, 24<sup>th</sup> September.

In conclusion, I would like to mention that it was our much admired butcher, Paddy Ryan’s, 70th birthday last Monday and I believe that this week his business celebrates 60 years of service in Much Wenlock. Paddy and his wife have worked tirelessly for all these years serving the town, particularly through the lockdown period, and the High Street would be a less attractive place to visit without them. I know that Councillors will agree that we should mark this occasion appropriately, and I would like to propose that we, as a Council, send a letter to him congratulating him on his double milestone this week.”

Councillor Thomas seconded the proposal, agreeing that Paddy Ryan was a pillar of the community and that it would be fitting to mark the anniversaries with a letter of thanks.

**It was RESOLVED to send a letter of thanks to Mr and Mrs Ryan to mark Paddy Ryan’s 70<sup>th</sup> birthday and 60 years of the butcher’s business, A Ryan & Son.**

## 2. Apologies for Absence

Councillor Will Benbow – prior engagement, Councillors John O’Dowd and Duncan White – holiday, Councillor Wilf Grainger – work, Councillor Chris Tyler – family matter.

## 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

Councillors had received a written report from PCSO Mal Goddard, who also provided a verbal update. It was hoped that a new Police Constable might join the team as early as next month, although this was still to be confirmed. PCSO Goddard reported that nine arrests had been made for the theft of agricultural equipment over an area from North Wales to Shropshire, with one person listed as resident in Much Wenlock. The nine individuals would appear at Mold Crown Court on 30<sup>th</sup> June and the cases were likely to be transferred to Shrewsbury. All those arrested were currently out on bail.

Since the written report had been prepared, there had been one report of an off-road motorbike being ridden in Sheinton Street but no identification. Councillors were asked to pass on any relevant information. PCSO Mal Goddard was thanked for attending and left the meeting.

#### 7. Shropshire Council Report

Shropshire Councillor, Daniel Thomas, presented the following report:

**“Gaskell Arms Junction Update:** the proposals to improve the Gaskell Arms Junction have come through and have been forwarded to all Councillors; due to the nature of the work this is in confidential session, but I am hopeful Councillors will respond positively to the proposals.

**Changing of Double Yellow Lines:** the date for the consultation to change some double yellow lines on Much Wenlock’s streets is set to be confirmed shortly. Depending on the weather, this will be on the square or in the museum and will be well publicised.

**Summary of Shropshire Council Annual Report:** Shropshire Council faced a challenging year in 2022-23. Despite some successes, such as a Good OFSTED rating for Children’s Services, the Council was hit by a budget deficit of £10-17m, a crisis in the care market, and the usual problems with road surfaces remain. The Council plans to address these challenges, including reducing costs, protecting essential services, and working with partners to improve the care market. The Council is committed to maintaining a solid financial footing and confidently moving forward in 2023-24.

The easiest way to describe the Council’s revenue budget is to say that for every £5 we spend, £4 is spent on social care, and then out of the remaining £1, 50p is spent on the waste contract. So, everything else the Council does is paid for out of the remaining 50p and any funding we get from central government.

Our £60m investment into Highways is paying off, but the mix of wet and freezing conditions over the winter meant many potholes have appeared. Over the summer, we plan to catch up. However, as national and local news reported, we need significant government investment in road infrastructure, particularly as funding is allocated by population, not by road network.

Four big projects that are under way in Shropshire are:

- **Redevelopment of the Riverside in Shrewsbury:** an award of nearly £18.7M from central government for the redevelopment of the Riverside area in Shrewsbury has enabled us to move the project forward. Over the summer there will be a number of public events being held and we will also be publishing the Movement Strategy which will affect Shrewsbury.
- **The Local Plan:** Shropshire Council has fulfilled its ‘Duty to Cooperate’. The Inspection is continuing with a lot of work to be undertaken to get to the next stage.
- **The Future of Shirehall:** it was agreed at a meeting of Full Council that we would be leaving the Shirehall for a new home in the town centre. I have made no secret of the facts surrounding this building, which is expensive to run, no longer fit for purpose and will be very expensive to refurbish, therefore the future of the Council is in the town centre.
- **The North West Relief Road:** the final public consultation period has now concluded, and we move closer to getting the application to Committee. We are still expecting the meeting to be held in early summer.

**Surgery:** my next advice surgery will be held on Saturday, 10<sup>th</sup> of June, between 10.30 am and 12 noon at the museum. No appointment is necessary. I’ll be joined by Town Councillor Susan Crooke-Williams and a representative from the Police.”

Councillor Thomas was asked when further electrical work in the High Street would be undertaken. He advised that further work was required but the problems had been mitigated. With Much Wenlock being a tourist town, it was likely that the work would be carried out in the autumn.

**8. Minutes**

- a. It was **RESOLVED** to approve and adopt the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2023.
- b. It was **RESOLVED** to approve and adopt the minutes of the Town Council Committee meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> May 2023.
- c. It was **RESOLVED** to adopt the minutes of the Planning & Environment Committee meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> April 2023.
- d. It was **RESOLVED** to adopt the minutes of the Finance & Asset Management Committee meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2023.

**9. Town Clerk's Report**

Members noted the written and verbal report from the Town Clerk and the Clerk's forthcoming annual leave.

**10. Finance & Asset Management Committee Meeting Date March 2024**

Members noted that there had been an error in the 2023/24 Council meeting schedule and **RESOLVED** to approve the date of the Finance & Asset Management Committee meeting for March 2024 as Tuesday, 19<sup>th</sup> March 2024.

**11. Internal Audit Report**

- a. Members considered the final Internal Audit Report for 2022/23 and noted the recommendations of the auditor. Thanks were expressed to the RFO and Clerk.
- b. It was **RESOLVED** to approve the action taken by the Finance & Asset Management Committee in nominating Councillor Susan Crooke-Williams to carry out periodic checks of the petty cash, in response to the recommendation of the auditor.

**12. Annual Accounts 2022/23**

- a. It was **RESOLVED** to approve income and expenditure from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023.
- b. It was **RESOLVED** to approve the balance sheet as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023.
- c. It was **RESOLVED** to approve the bank reconciliation as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023.

**13. Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2022/2023**

- a. Members noted the Annual Internal Audit Report 2022/23 forming part of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return.
- b. Members considered and **RESOLVED** to approve the Town Council's response to the Annual Governance Statement 2022/23 - Section 1 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return.
- c. Members considered and **RESOLVED** to approve the Accounting Statements for 2022/2023 - Section 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return.
- d. Members considered and **RESOLVED** to approve the Explanation of Variances.
- e. Members considered and **RESOLVED** to approve the reconciliation between boxes 7 and 8 in Section 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return.
- f. Members noted and **RESOLVED** to approve the period for the exercise of public rights from Wednesday, 14<sup>th</sup> June 2023 to Tuesday, 25<sup>th</sup> July 2023.

**14. Additional Signatory for Unity Trust Bank**

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the nomination of Councillor Susan Crooke-Williams as an additional signatory for Unity Trust Bank, as recommended by the Finance & Asset Management Committee.

**15. The Guildhall Project**

- a. Members received a report from the Council's consultant, Greenwood Projects, on progress with the Guildhall project and noted a verbal report from Councillor Themans. A list of stakeholders had been provided to Greenwood Projects for consultation. The outcome of two grant funding applications was awaited, however, the Council might be required to make up any shortfall from its own funds.  
**It was RESOLVED** to provide Council funds from the Heritage and Property earmarked reserves to make up any shortfall in funding for the viability study for the Guildhall.
- b. Members reviewed and **RESOLVED** to approve the tender brief for the viability study and to move forward with the tender process.

## 16. CCTV

Members noted a report on progress with research into options for upgrading the town's CCTV system. Due to the cost, a reduced scheme was being considered for the centre of the town only and revised quotations would be requested. Potential funding options were also being investigated. Contact would be made with the police for information and advice. Options would be presented to Council in due course.

## 17. 'Meet the Leader' 13<sup>th</sup> July 2023

Members noted that Shropshire Councillor Lezley Picton, Leader of Shropshire Council, would be coming to Much Wenlock to hold a 'Meet the Leader' session on Thursday, 13<sup>th</sup> July, between 10.00 am and 12.00 noon, under the Corn Exchange. This event was aimed at members of the public.

## 18. Shropshire Council Powers to Enforce Driving Offences

Members noted that Shropshire Council had been granted 'moving traffic powers' by the Department for Transport, due to come into effect on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2023. Shropshire was the first rural county in the country to be granted this power.

## 19. Correspondence from Philip Dunne MP

Members noted the response from Philip Dunne MP to the Town Council's correspondence regarding support for the Climate and Ecology Bill. Mr Dunne stated that whilst the Bill had been formally given a date for a second reading, it was unlikely to receive Parliamentary time. He advised that tackling climate change was a top priority for the Government and listed past legislation.

## 20. Consultation

Members considered a response to the following consultation:

- a. Draft recommendations for division boundaries in Shropshire, response deadline 10<sup>th</sup> July 2023 (full details available on the Local Government Boundary Commission website: <https://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/shropshire>).

Members were informed that the recommendations from the Boundary Commission were different to the proposals submitted by Shropshire Council. The Boundary Commission proposed to move Easthope, Shipton and Stanton Long out of the Much Wenlock division and into the Brown Clee division. Members noted the close community ties with those parishes. It was also proposed to move Hughley, Kenley and Church Preen into the Much Wenlock division. It was proposed to leave Broseley Wood in the Much Wenlock division, rather than moving it into the Broseley division, as would be appropriate for its community identity. The proposals were focussed on numbers, rather than community links.

**It was RESOLVED to object to the removal of Easthope, Shipton and Stanton Long from the Much Wenlock division as the community identity of this parish was aligned with Much Wenlock. Further, to recognise that Broseley Wood residents felt part of Broseley and that Much Wenlock Town Council would support the inclusion of Broseley Wood in the Broseley division, rather than retention in the Much Wenlock division.**

- b. Shropshire Great Outdoors Annual Public Survey 2023, deadline for response 6<sup>th</sup> August 2023.  
Members noted that the survey was aimed at members of the public and that individual responses to the survey would be appropriate.

## 21. 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 June 2023 and notification of AGM and celebration on 11<sup>th</sup> July at 2pm at the Birchmeadow Centre, Broseley
- h. VCSA newsletters
- i. News from Shropshire Hills AONB
- j. South Shropshire Youth Network information regarding Youth Conference on 24<sup>th</sup> June
- k. Lord Lieutenant's Newsletter, Coronation Special, May 2023
- l. News from Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust
- m. Zero Carbon Shropshire Green News June 2023

## 22. Agenda items for next Town Council meeting

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

**23. Date of next meeting**

Members noted that the next meeting would be held on Thursday, 6<sup>th</sup> July 2023 at 7.00pm at the Guildhall, Much Wenlock. The Mayor gave apologies in advance and stated that the Deputy Mayor would chair the meeting.

---

**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.

**24. Consultants for Neighbourhood Plan Review**

Members noted that the Clerk had obtained three proposals from consultants and was awaiting a fourth. In accordance with the recommendation from the Planning & Environment Committee, it was **RESOLVED to consider the consultancy proposals when all were to hand.**

**25. Gaskell Corner Proposals**

Members reviewed WSP proposals for the Gaskell corner and considered the recommendation from the Planning & Environment Committee. **It was RESOLVED to respond to WSP with agreed questions and observations and to support Option 4 c, with an agreed amendment.**

The meeting closed at 8.45 pm.

Signed ..... Deputy Mayor      Date .....