

MUCH WENLOCK TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
held at The Guildhall, Much Wenlock
at 7 pm on Thursday, 8th February 2024

Present: Councillors Susan Crooke-Williams, David Fenwick (in the chair), Wilfred Grainger, Marcus Themans, Daniel Thomas, Christian Toon, Chris Tyler, Linda West, Duncan White.

In attendance: Trudi Barrett – Town Clerk, PCSO Mal Goddard

1. Mayor's Welcome

The Mayor presented the following report:

This month has seen the start to the High Street electrical connections road works, which is moving ahead well, and our County Councillor will update you further on that shortly.

Councillor White let us know that a tile had fallen off the roof of the Guildhall one Saturday morning, interrupting market sales. He has looked at the problem from the first floor of the building opposite and has identified other tiles which need attention. The Clerk is now aware of this and is seeking quotes.

Councillor Toon has put together a very good letter which has been sent to Travis Perkins asking if they would be interested in contributing to the Queen Street toilets refurbishment, and we await their reply. Thank you Christian.

Last evening the Planning Committee held a meeting regarding the Neighbourhood Plan review, attended by interested parties in the town, and our consultant, Alison Eardley, gave an excellent presentation to us all. There was a spirited discussion and the consultant outlined the timetable for the review and made it clear that there is a lot of work to be done. More on that later.

The HSBC Bank is to hold a pop-up bank event in the church tomorrow, Friday, between 9.30am and 1.30pm.

The Spar shop in the town has been closed for two days this week for a refit, and we are told that it will operate on reduced hours to allow the shelves to be re-stocked.

The Council's Strategic Flood Group will hold a meeting on 23rd February, when our MP, Philip Dunne, will attend. And finally the vandalised bench on Victoria Road opposite the bus shelter has been repaired by the Town Council.

2. Apologies for Absence

Councillor William Benbow – away, Councillor John O'Dowd – unwell.

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

Members noted with thanks the written report provided by PCSO Mal Goddard. In addition, PCSO Goddard advised that a 4x4 vehicle had been stolen recently from an outbuilding at Atterley.

He was aware of recent anti-social behaviour and vandalism in the town but there were no suspects at present.

PCSO Goddard was thanked for attending and left the meeting.

7. Shropshire Council Report

Shropshire Councillor, Daniel Thomas, presented the following report:

Neighbourhood Plan: the Neighbourhood Plan review is picking up speed; last night, I joined Town Councillors in a meeting to look at the process with key representatives from the Civic Society and the Refresh Group. I found it a very productive meeting and look forward to supporting the review as it progresses.

Much Wenlock Swimming Pool: following the planned maintenance before Christmas, contractors identified issues with the two pool filters; unfortunately, both need to be replaced. The filters are manufactured in Spain and the estimated lead-in time is 6-8 weeks. Understandably, this is frustrating for everyone; once I know the exact delivery date, I will publicise it.

Road Works: the National Grid electricity upgrade has overrun by 2 days and should be finished tomorrow. This delay, whilst inconvenient, should mean it won't need to be closed again by National Grid. I hope the free car parking for the closure has proven effective in mitigating losses to our fantastic traders.

Callaughtons Ash 30 mph Zone: my campaign to get the 30 mph speed zone moved further up Callaughtons Lane, thus making the road safer for all pedestrians, is at the final stage, with a road closure 8 am until 5 pm on 14th – 16th of this month. It's taken some time to get this work done, and thank you to the town council for their support in pushing for this.

Surgery: my next advice surgery will be held on Saturday, 10th February, between 10.30 a.m. and 12 noon at Much Wenlock Museum. No appointment is necessary. I'll be joined by Town Councillor Susan Crooke-Williams and a representative from the Police.

The following matters were raised with Councillor Thomas:

a. The covers had been taken off the parking pay stations before the High Street was reopened and traffic wardens had been out earlier in the day, ticketing those who had parked in the car park without paying. Councillor Thomas agreed to follow this up.

b. The increases in parking charges agreed by Shropshire Council would affect tourists and residents. The cost of a residents parking permit had doubled over the last few years. Councillor Thomas advised that the number of residents car parking permits issued in Much Wenlock had dropped from 16 in January 2022 to 8 in January 2024. He felt that looking at all of the car parks across the county together did not make sense as local conditions would vary. The Shropshire Council Cabinet decision was disappointing and Councillor Thomas had raised his concerns with the Leader and the Portfolio Holder. It would be the responsibility of Shropshire Council to publicise the new charges.

c. The dog waste bin in Station Road was damaged. This had been reported internally by the operative but Councillor Thomas was asked to push along a replacement as the bin was well used. The dog waste bin in Victoria Road had been set alight and had been out of use and covered by a bag for a month. Councillor Thomas agreed to follow up these matters.

8. Minutes

- a. It was **RESOLVED** to approve and adopt the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 11th January 2024.
- b. It was **RESOLVED** to adopt the minutes of the Planning & Environment Committee meeting held on 5th December 2023.
- c. It was **RESOLVED** to adopt the minutes of the Finance & Asset Management Committee meeting held on 21st November 2023.

9. Town Clerk's Report

Members noted the written and verbal report from the Town Clerk.

10. Interim Internal Audit

Members noted that the interim internal audit had been carried out on 18th January 2024 and reviewed by the Finance & Asset Management Committee on 23rd January. The internal auditor had raised no concerns.

It was RESOLVED to convey thanks to the RFO.

11. The Guildhall Project

Councillors noted an update on the Guildhall project. A meeting had been held with Greenwood Projects on 25th January to review progress. Comments on the draft Audience Development Plan had been returned to Focus Consultants and this element of the work would be completed by the end of April. Thereafter, the Council could begin to look at possible funders to move forward to the next stage. It was noted that this was a long term project and that it could take up to two years for the development phase and up to five years to implement the project.

12. Neighbourhood Plan Review

Members received an update on the Neighbourhood Plan review. A meeting had been held the previous evening between members of the Planning & Environment Committee, the consultant, Alison Eardley, and members of the Civic Society and Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Refresh Group. The meeting and feedback had been positive. It was noted that the current Locality funding would expire at the end of March but a further application could be made for any unspent portion of the funding. Councillors were keen to move forward quickly with the review.

It was RESOLVED to hold a launch event for the Neighbourhood Plan review on Saturday, 9th March at the Priory Hall between 10.00am and 4.00pm.

It was RESOLVED to set up an enablement team for the launch event comprising Councillors Will Benbow, Wilf Grainger, Dan Thomas and Chris Tyler as well as two representatives from the Civic Society and two representatives from the Refresh Group.

At the launch event members of the community would be invited to become directly involved in the review. They could put themselves forward to join a working group to consider specific objectives and areas of interest, or to join the steering group. Following the launch event membership of the steering group would be finalised.

The Clerk was asked to check the availability of the consultant for a remote meeting to plan the launch event.

13. Shropshire Local Plan Review

Members received an update on the Shropshire Local Plan Review. On 18th January the Inspectors had posted a response to Shropshire Council's request for clarification to ID36. There had been little progress towards Stage 2 of the Examination.

14. Car Parking Charges

Members noted with dismay that Shropshire Council's Cabinet had agreed to increase car parking charges across the county from 1st April 2024. Shropshire Councillor Dan Thomas had already expressed concerns to the Leader of that Council.

It was RESOLVED to send a letter to Shropshire Council outlining the Town Council's objections to the increase in parking charges.

Councillors were asked to provide specific comments to the Clerk by 13th February.

15. Correspondence

Members noted the following items, which they had received by 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. Information from the RSN Rural Market Town Group
- f. VCSA newsletters
- g. News from Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust
- h. Listing of events at The Edge Arts Centre
- i. Information on Shropshire Council Flood Grants
- j. Zero Carbon Shropshire Green News January 2024 and February 2024
- k. South Shropshire Climate Action Newsletters January and February 2024
- l. Press release: Kyle Gordon confirmed as next Chief Constable for West Mercia Police
- m. Healthwatch Shropshire Press Release: Data Review of GP Appointments
- n. Shropshire Council: Lezley's Leader Update January 2024
- o. News from West Mercia PCC.
- p. Announcement of recruitment of new Alliance Executive Lead for Street Scene at Shropshire Council.
- q. Information on free digital skills training from School of Coding and Shropshire Council.
- r. Friendly Transport Service Newsletter February 2024.
- s. Press release: Next round of funding for Crowdfund Shropshire.

16. Agenda items for next Town Council meeting

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

17. Date of next meeting

Members noted that the next meeting would be held on Thursday, 7th March 2024 at 7.00pm at the Guildhall, Much Wenlock.

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.**

