

BRIDGNORTH TOWN COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of Bridgnorth Town Council held
in the Mayor's Parlour, College House on Monday, 28 October 2013 at 7.15pm**

Present: The Town Mayor, Councillor R Gill in the Chair,
Councillors Mrs J Bradshaw, D Cooper, Mrs V Gill,
J Gittins, A Hinton, D Jennings, M Mackenzie, Mrs A Rogers,
D Seipel and Mrs C Walden

In Attendance: Town Clerk, Ms A Wilson
Deputy Town Clerk, Miss O Glaze
Minute Secretary and transcribed by Mrs S Corfield
4 Members of the Public

0455/1314 **FIRE SAFETY ANNOUNCEMENT**

The meeting commenced with a fire safety announcement by the Mayor.

0456/1314 **RECORDING OF MEETING**

The Mayor announced that the meeting would be recorded.

0457/1314 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

a) A question had been received from Mr A Tacchi as follows:

“Did the Council Clerk and the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Mrs C Baines mislead the Councillors, public and press in asserting in the press that the Council only had one quote because it had a platinum agreement with the CCTV maintenance contractors which meant it wasn't allowed to go out to tender anywhere else?”

Response from the Town Mayor:

The question refers to a situation that occurred before the current council took office and not therefore when Councillor Mrs Baines was Deputy Mayor.

The Town Council did have a platinum agreement with Technical Services Shropshire Ltd. for the maintenance of the CCTV equipment. There is a letter in the Council's CCTV file from Technical Services which says:

“Terms under maintenance - Platinum held contract
Technical Services will no longer be able to offer the Platinum Contract to the Council if CCTV equipment is provided by a third party.”

Second part of the Question from Mr A Tacchi:

“In the light of evidence that no such contract existed and the purchase as reported to the press would have been unlawful, what action would Councillors be proposing to take against those that made the false statements to the press and if such statements are found to be false should they hold Public Office?”

Response from the Mayor:

He found the statement self contradictory, making a statement and then saying, if, therefore he found himself unable to answer it.

b) A question was posed from the floor by Dr. Anthony Daniels:

“Can the Council give an unequivocal assurance to the people of Bridgnorth that it signed a five year rolling contract with Technical Services Ltd for the maintenance of CCTV cameras?

What payments were made to that company in the years 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012?

Can the Council assure the people of Bridgnorth that it has complied fully with its Financial Regulations, Antifraud Policy and Code of Conduct?”

The Mayor was not able to give answers at this time but he assured Dr. Daniels that all the relevant information was in the CCTV files and he would make sure that Dr Daniels received a written answer.

0458/1314 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillor Mrs C Baines (alternative commitment)
Councillor N Cottrell (unwell)
Councillor E Marshall (holiday)
Councillor G Mountcastle (unwell)
Councillor Ms V Voysey (work commitment)

RESOLVED: to accept the apologies for absence.

0459/1314 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor D Cooper advised that he was a member of the Civic Society and therefore he had a personal interest in Agenda item 5.

Councillor Mrs J Bradshaw stated that as she lives in Tasley she would declare a personal interest in Agenda item 5.

0460/1314 **SAMDev**

Councillor D Cooper outlined the SAMDev Proposals to the Councillors.

Eighteen months ago, Shropshire Council consulted on its “preferred sites” for development in the Bridgnorth area up to 2026. This mainly involved land at Tasley, with proposals for 500 homes, local services and facilities, and six hectares of employment land across the by-pass next to a relocated Livestock Market.

Three quarters of the people who responded opposed the total number of houses intended. Roughly the same proportion opposed each of the two main housing sites, one either side of Church Lane. There was strong opposition to the proposal to allow development across the by-pass, but with mixed views as to the principle of making more land available for employment use.

This year, Shropshire Council have consulted on an alternative proposal that still uses the two sites either side of Church Lane, broadly with housing to the North and employment to the South, with no development across the by-pass. We don’t know as yet what the public response to this consultation is, but we have now heard that Tasley Parish Council feels unable to support either this or the earlier proposal.

Somewhat belatedly, Shropshire Council’s planners have accepted that it is realistic to expect that over the next 13 years, up to 300 homes could be built on what are called “windfall” sites inside the existing built up area. By way of illustration, in less than 6 months since the beginning of April plans for 36 new homes have been approved in Bridgnorth on small windfall sites. This Council agreed last year that we need 300 homes in total up to 2026, but the latest Shropshire Council consultation suggested building 250 at Tasley and assumed only 50 would be on windfall sites.

So, we think we need 300 homes and it looks as if that many could be built within the Town even if no green-field sites are allocated. Unfortunately, life isn’t that simple. These days, we have something called the National Planning Policy Framework, with an over-riding presumption in favour of what the Government calls “sustainable economic development”. The planners also said that in the light of this and Shropshire’s Core Strategy that “developers will argue at examination that it would be reasonable to expect the town to contribute to meeting Shropshire’s needs.” They consider that Shropshire Council is “likely to have to show at least one reasonably sized allocation or allocations equivalent to at least 200 homes.”

It is fully appreciated that there is the need for Shropshire's final plan to be robust enough to stand up to examination by the Planning Inspectorate at an enquiry next year. However, it is felt that it would be inappropriate for this Council to support a proposal for development in Tasley which would be unacceptable to the residents there and to the Parish Council. Therefore, could we ask that a further attempt be made by the planners to try and produce a proposal which would be acceptable both to this Council and to Tasley.

Finally, to quote from item 5.3 of Shropshire's Economy Topic Paper from July 2008, this was a discussion document leading up to the development of the Core Strategy. It suggested that new housing and job creation through economic development should be balanced, and that "This is particularly important in Shropshire's principal settlements where it will help to limit the need for out-commuting by making these important centres more self-sufficient and sustainable." Subsequently, Shropshire's Core Strategy has been adopted and contains the following statement as part of policy CS15: "Where appropriate to the role and function of each identified centre, development will be encouraged to: Support a balanced approach to the planned level of housing and employment growth for each town". It is hoped that this will be adhered to in the final SAMDev proposals.

Councillor Cooper was thanked for his overview.

Members then went on to discuss concerns that a new traffic island had been proposed for the new development at a cost of £0.75m. There also seemed to be a total lack of regard for services within the Bridgnorth area.

Members raised their concerns that the Police were downgrading in the area together with the pressure on ambulance services, doctors surgeries, schools and leisure services.

The Mayor proposed to make a submission to the Shropshire Council taking into account the comments from the Members. The full proposal from the Shropshire Council was due to be in place in December 2013 and therefore a submission from the Town Council should be made as soon as possible.

Following the discussion it was agreed to make a proposal to Shropshire Council:

It was unanimously **RESOLVED** that in view of the fact that there are too many unanswered questions in relation to the ability of our infrastructure to cope with a large influx of houses and in view of the fact that the 300 houses that were deemed to be necessary could come from windfall development we feel that we could not accept Shropshire Council's proposals for the development at Tasley,

and we ask that they come back and consult with Tasley Parish Council and Bridgnorth Town Council before finalising their proposals.

It was further **RESOLVED** that should the Shropshire Council agree to a further meeting with Tasley Parish Council and Bridgnorth Town Council that a meeting with Tasley Parish Council be held beforehand with a view to move this matter forward.

0461/1314 **EXTERNAL AUDIT**

A copy of the external auditors report from Mazars LLP had been circulated.

The Town Clerk reported that the Town Council had already agreed the internal audit and noted the actions required which had been very minimal.

The Deputy Town Clerk and the Town Clerk were not very clear as to the other comment on the Auditor's Report as the breakdown of all the figures had been submitted to the Auditors with a explanation of significant year on year variances and all the Annual Return paperwork, but the Auditor had still come back for further clarification.

It was **PROPOSED** that the Auditors Report be accepted.

Councillor D Seipel asked that a recorded vote be taken:

Councillors	D Cooper, J Gittins, Mrs J Bradshaw, M Mackenzie, D Jennings Mrs A Rogers, Mrs V Gill, R Gill
	Voted in favour of the Proposal
Councillors	D Seipel and Mrs C Walden
	Voted against this proposal
Councillor	A Hinton Abstained

It was **RESOLVED** that the External Auditors Report be accepted.

0462/1314 **BUSINESS AND ENTERPRISE TEAM OF SHROPSHIRE – IT SURVEY**

Members were asked to consider whether they would agree that the Survey from the Business and Enterprise Team of Shropshire Council be circulated to our business contacts.

It was **PROPOSED** that Bridgnorth Town Council forward this survey to our business contacts.

It was **AGREED** that this survey would be circulated.

The meeting closed at 7.55pm