Minutes of the Annual Town meeting held in The Castle Hall, West Castle Street, Bridgnorth on Wednesday 22 April 2015 at 7pm

Present: Cllr E Marshall (Town Mayor), Councillors D Cooper, N Cottrell, G Davies, R Gill, Mrs V Gill, J Gittins, A Hinton, M Mackenzie, G Mountcastle, D Seipel, Mrs C Walden and R Whittle OBE.

Ms Anne Wilson (Town Clerk), Ms A King and Mrs L Gardner (minutes secretaries)

Councillor C Lea (Shropshire Council), Inspector R Thomas (Police), T Brettell with T Bingham and B Davies (guest speakers), and 31 members of the public.

1. Welcome by the Town Mayor, Councillor E Marshall

The Town Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained that the meeting was the Annual Town Meeting for the residents of the Parish of Bridgnorth.

No apologies were given.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 2 April 2014 were accepted as previously circulated.

3. Guest Speaker

The Town Mayor then introduced Tom Brettell, from Vision Bridgnorth as the guest speaker.

Mr Brettell informed the meeting that he was Acting Chairman of Vision Bridgnorth and that he was at this meeting to give an informal presentation and to answer questions. He also stated that he had asked Tim Bingham and Brian Davies to join him in the presentation. Mr Brettell explained that he had initially been involved in Vision Bridgnorth as the Community Action Officer at Shropshire Council. He was a local man and had worked with the Town Plan which was published in 2012 following the circulation of a questionnaire to all households within the WV15/WV16 postcode areas. The questionnaire had asked residents what they thought made Bridgnorth special and what improvements they thought could be made. The result had been the Action Plan. Lots of work had taken place since to action the findings including bringing together other groups with a vision i.e. Vision Bridgnorth. Vision Bridgnorth was waiting for charity status which would bring with it the advantages of being able to trade, have a bank account and to raise and distribute funds to name but a few. It will consist of four working groups i.e. Environment, Community, Town Centre and Economy. Mr Brettell stressed that the meetings are very informal. He stated that they hope to be very active this year and are now on Facebook, Twitter and that they have their own website. They currently have about 80 members and would welcome enquiries from anyone who wants to get involved, particularly in events such as the Carnival.

Brian Davies explained that he had lived in Bridgnorth for over 40 years and is very involved within the community. His interests grew from a placement with Advantage West Midlands and his involvement with a Bridgnorth Voluntary Group which, when first started ten years ago, was about social enterprise for their areas resulting in the potential for numerous
projects. Following the setting up of a business in the future this can then be referred back to the Town Plan.

Tim Bingham stated that he was born in Bridgnorth and had lived in the area all of his life. He said that he would like to see Bridgnorth as a major tourist destination, similar to places such as Ludlow. He remarked that like many local people he has not visited all of the tourist attractions on his doorstep.

Mr Brettell invited questions from the floor.

Q: Mr Mike Proudman from the Town Plan Steering Group stated that it had taken 3 years to implement the Vision Bridgnorth Group.

A: Mr Brettell stressed that Vision Bridgnorth was about going forward and playing to people’s strengths.

Q: Resident Mrs Janet Smith asked if there was a fee to join.

A: Mr Brettell confirmed that there was not.

Q: Resident Peter Randell asked what the Working Group was doing now.

A: Mr Brettell stated that the Group had to come up with manageable way of achieving the Town Action Plan and had already completed work on the steps, the riverside and the installation of a skatepark.

Brian Davies added that peoples’ specific expertise and their interests were utilised for projects and Tom Brettell used the example of an Environment Group looking at an Interpretation Scheme for visitors for which it was hoped Lottery funding could be sought. He added that the Environment Group would, as normal, have to liaise with the Town Council and Shropshire Council.

Q: Resident John Taylor asked who was responsible for cleaning Library Steps and he also stated that although the trees had apparently been cut along the Castle Walk, they still appear to be blocking the vision down to Low Town.

A: The Town Mayor requested that this question deferred to a more appropriate time during the meeting to which Mr Taylor agreed.

The Mayor thanked Messrs Brettell, Davies and Bingham for their presentations.

4. Review of the work of the Town Council:

(a) The Mayor’s Report from Councillor Edward Marshall

“This is a report on the activities of the Town Council during the past year. I will begin with three significant items that residents have probably noted.

The first is that Bridgnorth Town Council has not increased its council tax for the financial year which has just started, 2015/16.

The second is the Town Hall. Currently cocooned in scaffolding, it is undergoing significant maintenance work. Leaks in the bell towers, roof and elsewhere have been sealed,
external timber and plaster is currently being repaired, and external decoration is underway. Work has just started on cleaning and repairing all the stained glass windows. Both clocks have been repaired and are now working. It is anticipated that all the work will be completed within the next few weeks, and scaffolding removed. The total cost of all this work will be around £75,000.

The third significant item concerns CCTV. The council have now agreed all details of the upgrade to the current system plus the addition of further cameras, and new equipment in the CCTV Monitoring Room. This will give the town a new high tech CCTV system, comparable with or even better than any other local authority CCTV system in the county. The total cost will be around £50,000, almost all of which will be funded by grants totalling around £46,500. The Police & Crime Commissioner and Shropshire Council will be providing the grants. The orders have been placed, and installation should commence within the next few weeks.

The Town Council is fully aware of financial and other pressures arising from the current national and local economic situation, and particularly the dramatic reduction in services being provided by Shropshire Council. This is having an impact on services provided by the Town Council. An example is that the Council is now totally responsible for all the public toilets in the town.

Steps have been taken to look very seriously at what the Council does in the future, the services we provide, and how they are delivered. To do this, a Performance Measurement and Improvement Working Party has been established. Hopefully, possible outcomes could be reduced costs and increased income. Another Working Party has been set up to look at the Boundaries of the town, to see if there is a need and benefit to the community by making changes. To improve efficiency and reduce administration costs, the Procurement Committee and Finance Sub-Committee have been amalgamated with the Administration and General Purposes Committee.

The Council have now taken over responsibility for the Community Hall in Low Town, but it will continue to be operated as an independent charity, with no financial contribution being required from the local taxpayers."

Councillor Marshall invited questions from the floor:

Q: Resident John Berrill stated that despite tree clearance work being carried out he felt that the tall leylandi on the Bylet Island to be an eyesore, that they could be blown down in a storm and obscured the view up to town. He further stated that although a few feet had recently been taken off the top of the trees, this was not enough.

A: Although the Mayor somewhat agreed, he said the Bylet Island was leased to the Bylet Bowling Club.

The Town Clerk confirmed that the Bylet Bowling Club were responsible for the maintenance of the trees on the island and that she would pass on Mr Berrill’s comments. She added that the recent tree work may have been carried out by Shropshire Council but we had not been contacted about the work.

Q: Mrs Janet Smith asked when the work on the Town Hall was due for completion.

A: The Mayor referred the question to Mr Barry Ince, the Town Council’s Outdoors and Properties Manager who stated that some damage to timber work caused by
inappropriate repairs carried out in the past had recently been uncovered but it was hoped to complete the work within four weeks.

Q: Resident Mike Proudman raised concerns over the derelict building, formerly the Boy’s Club, in Low Town.

A: The Mayor again asked if this question could be deferred until a more appropriate part of the meeting.

4 (b) Report by Councillor D Cooper, Chairman of the Administration and General Purposes Committee

“The Administration and General Purposes Committee oversees the Council’s policies and procedures and its use of resources, including dealing with staffing matters. Although much of this work does not have a direct impact on members of the public, it plays a key role in ensuring that what the Council does meets legislative and other requirements and carries out the process of taking decisions on a reliable and sensible basis. Over the past year much work has been done to review and overhaul the basic operating rules of the Council, such as its standing orders and financial regulations; this work is ongoing and will hopefully be taken forward for adoption by the Council shortly.

One key area of work in the past year has been the implementation of the Local Government Transparency Code, which sets out the information about their activities which Councils should make available to members of the public and how they should do it. This Code was revised twice during 2014, each time increasing the amount of information which Councils either must, or are encouraged to, give to the public. The Code applies to all tiers of local government, so not all of it is relevant to the Town Council, but we have decided that where it is we will aim to provide all of the discretionary information as well as making the compulsory disclosures. The main way of doing this is through the Council’s website www.bridgnorthtowncouncil.gov.uk. The Government are making further changes to the Code this year, so this will be an ongoing piece of work for us.

Finally, as a streamlining exercise we have recently merged the Finance and Procurement Committees into the Administration and General Purposes Committee; hopefully this will reduce our costs going forward.”

4 (c) Report by Councillor David Cooper, Chairman of the Finance Sub-Committee

“Our work in looking after the Council’s finances includes regular monitoring of some aspects and bringing together the Council’s overall budget.

Council finances are quite different from those of a business, because our main financial objective is to provide value for money in what we do and to charge just as much Council Tax to residents as we need to do our work. We use reserves which are built up over a period of time to cover the cost of large and infrequent items of expenditure, like repairing the Town Hall. Currently, the regular annual cost of providing the Council’s services is £790 thousand, and it has income from charges
for services, property lettings and other sources of £284 thousand, so the amount it charges residents in Council Tax is around £506 thousand. That accounts for £115.88 of the Band D Council Tax bill and is collected by Shropshire Council on our behalf alongside the amounts they, the Fire Service and the Police charge. The Town Council’s element is just under 7.5% of the total amount Bridgnorth residents pay in Council Tax.

This year, balancing the budget was very challenging. At very short notice Shropshire Council let us know that they were likely to stop passing on to Towns and parishes part of a grant they receive from the Government to help pay the Council Tax of those in need. In Bridgnorth’s case, that grant was equivalent to 9% of our Council Tax receipts last year and dealing with that pressure on the budget has involved making cuts in costs and increasing charges for some services. The Council rose to the challenge and has delivered a budget which did not require an increase in Council Tax this year. Unfortunately, it looks as if the financial situation is going to continue to be challenging for some time.”

Questions were invited from the floor.

Q: Resident Mrs Deana Deighton asked whether it would be possible to include budget figures such as how much is in Reserves in the Town Council minutes.

A: Councillor Cooper confirmed that this is shown in the Accounts which are due to be signed off in June this year. He confirmed that there are 3 types of Reserves; General Reserves: Earmarked Reserves (monies set aside) and Usable Capital Receipts (released from sale of assets to be used).

Q: Deanna Deighton stated that the monthly Town Council minutes never state whether Reserves are plus or minus.

A: Councillor Cooper said that historically this was not done but having reviewed this aspect it is hope to implement this in the future.

Q: Peter Randell asked what cuts had been made to save money this year.

A: Councillor Cooper replied that although not shown in the budget, the Town Council had had to reduce the grants budget, had revisited the way they could save on planning and hanging baskets, had removed the Christmas Lights money and implemented savings on overtime by stopping the provision of the gazebo (resulting in overtime for staff) for the charity stall.

The Town Clerk added that some money had been taken out of Earmarked Reserves and placed under headings.

4 (d) Report by Councillor J Gittins, Chairman of Planning Committee

“Bridgnorth Town Council’s Planning Committee consists of six Members of Council and I have been the Chairman for the 2014/2015 year. Until recently we also had two co-opted Members, both of whom had previous experience as members of Town Council and also the Planning Committee. Very sadly one of our co-opted Members, Geoff Bodenham, passed away very recently and he will be greatly missed both as a colleague and a Member of the Planning Committee.”
This Committee considers on average 160 applications each year varying from tree works, property extensions, new builds, Listed Building Consent, replacement windows, change of use and erection of boundary walls to name but a few. The Town Council’s Planning Committee meetings are held every Monday fortnight at 7.15pm in the Mayor’s Parlour, College House, St. Leonard’s Close and members of the public are welcome to sit in on the meetings throughout the public sessions. The Planning Committee is currently the only Committee of the Town Council that has delegated powers, meaning they have authority to pass resolutions on all planning matters at Planning Committee meetings. This means that they do not have to wait for their recommendation to be ratified by Town Council by means of a resolution before they are submitted to Shropshire Council, although the minutes of the meetings are still taken to Town Council for ratification. The reason this committee was given delegated powers was because the majority of planning applications only have a 21 day consultation period from the date of validation. This would not allow sufficient time for the Planning Committee’s recommendations to be agreed by Town Council which only meets once per month before they are submitted to Shropshire Council. The exception to this is in relation to major projects affecting the wellbeing of the town which are referred back to Town Council.

There is an option within the Planning Committee agenda to include an application which has not been listed on the agenda, but is raised for consideration during the meeting if it has been received too late to be listed on the agenda but with a response required before the next meeting. This is the exception rather than the rule and usually applies to tree applications which often only have a 14 day consultation period.

Our role is purely advisory; we have no planning powers; this lies with Shropshire Council. The Shropshire Planning Authority takes our comments into consideration however, as well as those submitted by residents of the town and interested parties. All planning applications submitted to Shropshire Council can be viewed on their website and comments can be submitted direct via their website also.

Finally, I would like to thank my fellow committee members for the support they have given me during the year with the local knowledge they bring to our meetings and I would also like to extend a warm welcome to anyone wishing to join us at our meetings.”

4 (e) Report by Councillor J Gittins, Chairman of Property & Grounds Committee

“The Property and Grounds Committee makes recommendations to full Council for decisions on all of the Town Council’s assets in the town of Bridgnorth.

The Town Council is working in partnership with Bridgnorth Rugby Club on additional and community facilities, Bridgnorth Rowing Club and also the Bridgnorth Canoe Club in a joint venture.

In the past 12 months the memorial beds for both the RAF and the Navy have been established in the Castle Grounds in the shape of an aeroplane and a ship. In addition there will be another bed for the Army which will take the shape of a tank.
There are some building repair works that are being carried out at this present time on Town Council’s assets including the Town Hall, The Northgate Arch and also 1a High Street.

Bridgnorth Town Council’s Direct Labour Force staff has been very proactive in the work which they have done in the past 12 months maintaining the Cemetery, Castle Grounds, Town Hall, Castle Hall, town play areas and Severn Park to name a few.

In partnership with Shropshire Council work includes riverside enhancement, Tasley footpath and more recently in partnership with STAR Housing a new picnic area on Morfe Road and seating at the bus stop.

The Skateboard Park on the Crown Meadow is proving a very popular attraction and getting lots of use despite the bad weather. The Town Council will be entering the Heart of England in Bloom competition again this year after achieving a gold award for the past four consecutive years.

The Town Mayor officially opened the Memorial Garden in Bridgnorth Cemetery in November 2014. A service of prayers was conducted by the Reverend Liz Angell and Father Iain Griffiths and was attended by a number of the Town Councillors, members of the public and staff, this area is being used to scatter ashes and place memorial plaques for relatives and loved ones.

A project of voluntary work has transformed the waste land at the back of the Innage Lane community centre into a pleasant little garden of tranquillity where some of the less abled members of the community can now sit and relax. A special thank you to all council members that helped to achieve this, members of the community and for the generous donations of materials from a number of our local businesses.

The Town Council has been working with Theatre on the Steps and they have opened a ticket office in the Town Hall Kiosk. Plans to refurbish the Mayors Parlour and move it into the room which currently serves as the Annexe to offer a bigger meeting room and also additional staff working area is underway with planning permission recently confirmed.

Approval has now been given for both the Town Hall and the Castle Hall to hold Wedding ceremonies. Castle Hall is continuing its gradual modernisation and upgrade.”

Questions were invited from the floor.

Q: Peter Randell wanted to know what work was being carried out with the Rugby Club and the Rowing Club.

A: Councillor Gittins asked whether Mr Randell was referring to the proposed community building.

The Town Clerk stated that the Town Council had been working with the Rugby Club, the Rowing Club, various organisations, Vision Bridgnorth, sports and other organisation. She stated that they been working with the Rugby Club regarding additional parking on Foundry Park and hope now to extend this onto the grassed areas in the winter months and had been working with the Rowing Club to allow easier access over Severn Pak. She informed those present of a system which allowed the phoning in of a car registration number to allow access across the park.

Q: Resident Dave Wellings asked what the cost of the proposed facility would be.
A: The Town Clerk confirmed that costs were still being worked out but approximately £480,000

Q: Peter Randell wanted to know how much the Rugby Club and Rowing Club would be contributing.

A: The Town Clerk responded that the Rugby Club were no longer able to offer any financial contribution and the Rowing Club could not contribute financially at all.

Q: Peter Randell asked who actually wanted this facility.

A: The Town Clerk said that a feasibility study had been carried out including input from concessions and that the facility would include a café and education centre. She confirmed that costing had been done.

Q: David Wellings stated that catering operations in the park have failed in the past. He also stated that he believed that the Canoe Club were to obtain funding from grants.

Deanna Deighton felt that the idea was madness and pointed out that the original idea was for new toilets only.

The Mayor pointed out that those present at the meeting could make a proposal, second that proposal and vote upon it but that the Town Council would be duty bound to vote upon any decision made at this meeting and do not have to abide by this vote and the 16 elected Members of Council have to make the decision. He also pointed out that the previous council had decided on this proposed facility in Severn Park.

It was proposed by Mrs Deanna Deighton and seconded by Mr Dave Wellings that the Town Council be asked to abandon the idea of the proposed new building in Severn Park.

Votes for: 23
Votes against: 1
Abstentions: 14

Therefore the motion was carried that the above be referred back to Town Council

5. Accounts from Charities

Members were asked to receive the accounts from the following Charities:

   (a) Bridgnorth Parish Charity
   (b) Reverend Francis Wheeler’s Charity
   (c) Sir Robert Lee’s Charity

It was pointed out that the accounts had not been made available in advance of the meeting and very little was known about the charities. The Mayor pointed out that the meeting had only been asked to receive the accounts and not approve them. Councillor Whittle suggested that perhaps in future copies of the accounts could be available to look at upon arrival at the meeting.
Resident John Baines added that the accounts are only brought to this meeting for transparency and it makes no difference whether the vote at this meeting is yes or no.

The Mayor said that it would be assumed that the meeting accepts receipt of all the accounts.

6. Questions to Divisional Surveyor’s Department, Police, Shropshire Councillors and Bridgnorth Town Councillors

(a) Report from Graham Downes, Highways Manager for Shropshire Council (Bridgnorth Area)

Mr Downes said that he had worked for Shropshire Council for the last 14 years and had previously worked for Telford and Wrekin Council.

Mr Downes said that they were under pressure to maintain the highways to a safe standard but to keep within funds. The funding for highway maintenance has remained static at £1.2m annually within the whole of the former Bridgnorth District Council area. He pointed out that some schemes within the Local Transport Plan are funded by Developers and Shropshire Council. He highlighted some future schemes such as a new crossing and roundabout at Wenlock Road/Church Road; works to be carried out at the Hollybush Road/Kings Loade junction; a new footpath to be put in place on the B4373 at Northgate/Broseley Road and a pedestrian crossing in Salop Street outside the new Retirement Development for which the developer will pay a contribution. Mr Downes also stated that work was due to be carried out to footways in Westgate Drive, Victoria Road, by Star Aluminium and some kerbing work in East Castle Street.

Mr Downes invited questions from the floor.

Q: Resident David Deighton asked Mr Downes whether Shropshire Council were responsible for the High Street because of lack of space caused by the market stalls and large volumes of people trying to use the pavements on Saturdays and wondered if the stalls could be moved back or whether the pavement on the west side of the High Street could be extended.

A: Mr Downes replied that this could be a possibility subject to funding.

Q: Resident John Baines asked whether the Highways Department look into the matter of traffic waiting to cross two lanes of traffic into the Filling Station in Low Town. It was an accident waiting to happen.

Q: Mr Downes said he was aware of this problem but couldn’t understand why people didn’t use the nearby roundabout.

Q: Resident Brian Jones asked whether it would be possible to extend the double yellow lines in Stourbridge Road to prevent cars parking opposite the new properties as it was difficult to get past all the parked cars on this busy road.

A: Mr Downes said that he would speak to Alice Dilly (Principal Engineer at Shropshire Council).
Q: Brian Jones additionally asked whether the half crossing in Mill Street, just before the entrance to the Co-operative/Marks and Spencer car park, could be extended over the width of the road.

A: Councillor Christian Lea responded that the highway is not wide enough for a refuge in the middle of the road here as it has to be 3 metres wide for vehicles to pass through; hence the half crossing that we have.

Q: Resident Michael Grocock asked whether it would be possible to put in a sign with priority either up or down to reduce the speed of the traffic either going up to or coming down from the Aldi supermarket.

A: Mr Downes said that could be one possibility but an investigation would have to be carried out into speeds of traffic on that road.

Q: Tim Bingham wondered what could be done to prevent cars using the new designated motorcycle spaces in the High Street.

A: Mr Downes said he knew that Alice Dilly was aware of this problem.

Q: Resident Theresa Brunner raised concerns about the high pollution rate in Pound Street. She was concerned about the safety of the elderly residents in Squirrel Court and Talbot Court due to the large volume of traffic and size of vehicles using Pound Street. She expressed disappointment that no councillors had attended a recent meeting held by the Green Party to discuss the problem of pollution and wondered if there was anything that could be done to restrict the traffic and large lorries using this road. Ms Brunner said that there was to be a management plan to look at this but it died a death with the departure of the former District Council.

A: Mr Downes admitted that this was not his field of expertise but that it would be very difficult for vehicles not to use this route into town if they have to avoid other smaller roads for access into Bridgnorth.

Q: Resident John Taylor raised concerns about the speed of traffic on the Ludlow Road and said that the 30mph flashing sign is not accurate and simply flashes at all passing vehicles so does not deter speeding. He also asked the question deferred from earlier in the meeting about the responsibility of clearing Library Steps of rubbish.

A: Mr Downes noted his comments regarding both the 30mph flashing sign and also the state of the steps.

Q: John Baines asked why the by-pass had been closed for 4 nights recently.

A: Mr Downes replied that engineers had been checking out the expansion of the bridge. He added that next year work was to be carried out on the bridge expansion which would result in the by-pass being closed for several weeks.

Q: Councillor Adrian Hinton raised concerns about the condition of the roads.
A: Mr Downes said that every penny available had been spent on their upkeep and that the Ringway contract offered the best prices. He confirmed that Shropshire Council were tied into a 6 year contract with them.

Q. Councillor Ray Gill reported that the steps on Bernard’s Hill were very badly kept and scruffy considering they were a feature of the town.

A. Mr Downes noted his comments.

6 (b) Report from Inspector R Thomas from West Mercia Police

Inspector Thomas reported that that Bridgnorth was a low crime area and there had been a downward trend overall in crime overall trends over the last 3 to 4 years. He confirmed that Sgt Bailey was still at Bridgnorth Police Station but that emergencies were still dealt with from Malinsgate at Telford. He referred to the Police UK website which gives updates on cases viz when they are going to court etc. He stated however that this website also includes antisocial behaviour in the crime statistics whereas they do not. Their main focus is on crimes involving serious harm. Inspector Thomas gave the audience some budget figures.

He felt that the forthcoming General Election in May, might have some effect of policing.

Inspector Thomas invited questions from the floor.

Q. Resident Janet Smith asked whether Bridgnorth Police station is to be kept open and whether this decision is to be taken by the Police and Crime Commissioner.

A. Inspector Thomas replied that all buildings are under review as money still has to be saved. He commented that when people think ‘open’ they think staffed. Bridgnorth Police Station is still open but normally covered by Malinsgate.

Q. Cllr Adrian Hinton remarked that the police would appear to have many ANPR cars around Bridgnorth.

A. Inspector Thomas agreed and added that they can receive and transmit additional information also. He added that there are static ANPR columns locally also.

Q. Ms Anne Wilson, Town Clerk, said that at a recent event, alleged fraud within the Town Council had been reported. She asked if Inspector Thomas could confirm that this is not the case.

A. Inspector Thomas stated that he could not find anything wrong but although Mr Tacchi’s report of last year is being investigated by CID, the Council is not being investigated.

6 (c) Cllr Christian Lea of Shropshire Council representing Bridgnorth East and Astley Abbotts introduced himself and stated that he was happy to answer any questions tonight and if he was unable to, would get back to the questioner.

No additional questions relating to Shropshire Council were raised.
The Mayor, Councillor Edward Marshall, invited questions relating to Bridgnorth Town Council.

Q. Resident Mike Proudman referred to the Riverside Enhancement Scheme and the vacant building (former Boys Club) intended to be used for the youth of the town. He expressed concern that the asset value is not being used and that something should be done about it. He stated that £175.00 was being held until such time they have an affiliated body.

A. The Mayor responded that the Boys Club was a charity and had closed in 2000 and that the property had been sold in 2003. It had been sold on since then and had been to planning a few times but that the building was deteriorating. He stated that the official records of the charity appeared to have disappeared in 2000 but the Charity Commission does not seem to be chasing them.

It was commented upon that Shropshire Council have reduced their funding for youth.

Councillor Ray Gill said that efforts had been made to bring dialogue about but efforts had come to nothing.

Q. Resident Gordon Kelsall raised the question of possible pedestrianisation of the High Street.

A. Councillor James Gittins, stated that this had been brought to the attention of the Property & Grounds Committee meeting (on 15 April 2015) by members of the public. There were lots of pluses and minuses and it had been agreed in principal that a feasibility study into market day pedestrianisation be prepared in conjunction with key stake holders for public consultation and that a task and finish group be established to define terms of reference for the feasibility study and recommend how it should be carried out, including identifying any external funding required.

Councillor Mrs Val Gill stressed that it had only been suggested for Saturdays (market day).

Mr Brian Jones, resident and former Member of Town Council and Mayor, stated that in response to a questionnaire, 70% had wanted pedestrianisation on a Saturday but not the rest of the week.

Resident Mrs Deanna Deighton was at the above mentioned Property and Grounds Committee meeting. She claimed that a huge amount of shopkeepers, with the exception of Gadsby’s, were against this. Resident Janet Smith who was also at the meeting stated that market traders were also against this. She added that if the street was pedestrianised, arrangements would have to be made for picking up and dropping off but that unless the shopkeepers were on side it could not be pedestrianised.

Councillor Gittins commented that shopkeepers may have to adapt to what shoppers want.

Councillor Adrian Hinton suggested that this would need to go to consultation to everybody.
Mr David Deighton thought that three-quarter of people would be against and Councillor Gittins stated that most of these would be market traders.

Councillor Norman Cottrell asked how many questionnaires had been returned and was informed by Mike Proudman that 1700 responses had been received and it was confirmed that 70% of those responses had been in favour of pedestrianisation.

Councillor David Cooper stated that we need to decide how the High Street can be better used whilst supporting the businesses there.

The Town Clerk reiterated that the suggestion of pedestrianising the High Street was not brought to Council by the public, not by Council itself.

Resident Adrian Tacchi suggested that if the High Street was pedestrianised that perhaps the Meredith’s Yard market should move into the High Street too. He asked who the market authority is to which the Town Clerk responded that it is documented that the Town Council are.

Councillor Ray Gill commented that it seems easy to get into ‘head banging’ i.e. ‘us and them’. He wanted to point out that ‘we’ are a ‘we’. We can enhance our High Street; we just need to look at the whole package.

Q. Resident David Wellings asked Council Members whether they think it is acceptable for a noisy funfair to be sited less than 100 yards from residents commencing at 1pm each day for ten days. He complained about the noise and pollution from old diesel engines and generators. He felt it was not acceptable and thinks an alternative site should be sought.

A. The Town Clerk stated that the funfair was originally on Foundry Park but the two charter funfairs, one of whose date over Easter is more flexible, now both use Severn Park but they have to come to town twice a year.

Q. Councillor Christian Lea of Shropshire Council asked if there were any plans to replace any of the Severn Park Play equipment.

A. The Town Clerk replied that as part of the proposal for the new building on Severn Park the current play equipment would have to be relocated and could then be replaced with money in earmarked reserves.

Q. Peter Randell raised concerns that the High Street keeps on being closed for events and asked why they could not be held elsewhere. He suggested using Severn Park for markets.

A. Councillor Christian Lea, who is currently Bridgnorth Town Events Community Working Party/Committee Chairman said that it is hoped that local business can open on those events day and they are trying to work for the betterment of the town.

Councillor Ray Gill commented that it seems easy to get into ‘head banging’ i.e. ‘us and them’. He wanted to point out that ‘we’ are a ‘we’. We can enhance our High Street; we just need to look at the whole package.

Peter Randell queried if this does benefit the town to which the Town Clerk responded that it would if they opened. Mrs Janet Smith responded that many do open on Sundays. Mike Proudman confirmed that many tourists come into Bridgnorth for events such as the Bridgnorth Walk which closes the High Street.

6 (e) Report on Twinning by Councillor Mrs Val Gill
Councillor Mrs Val Gill wished to remind the audience that Bridgnorth have been twinned with Schrobenhausen in Bavaria since 1992 and with Thier in France since 1978.

She pointed out that Bridgnorth Twinning is run by volunteers and that each year's festival is held in in each town in rotation and is open for anyone to attend at a very reasonable cost. Visits are made by sports teams, school groups and choirs and many friendships are formed amongst Twinning members. Bridgnorth Twinning currently has 11 members on committee but they would be pleased to have new members and invited anyone who was interested to speak to her. She stated that this years' visit was to Shcrobenhausen and would be held between 19 – 22 June. Bridgnorth was due to host the event in 2017.

The Mayor thanked all those who had attended the meeting.

The meeting closed at 9.20 pm