

BRIDGNORTH TOWN COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Meeting of Bridgnorth Town Council
held in the Mayor's Parlour, College House on Tuesday 20th November 2018 at 7.15pm**

Present: The Town Mayor, Councillor R Whittle OBE in the Chair,
Councillors Mrs C Baines MBE, Ms S Barlow,
Dr J Buckley, Mr D Cooper, Dr C Dyson, Mr E Marshall,
Mr G Davies, Mr A Hinton, Mrs H Howell,
Mrs K Hurst-Knight, Mrs J Onions, Mrs C Walden

In Attendance: Town Clerk, Mr L Jakeman
RFO, Mrs R Williams

0385/1819 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Members noted the apologies as listed below:

Councillor	Mr R Fox	Unwell
Councillor	Mrs S Stevens	Personal Commitment
Councillor	Mrs C Whittle	Unwell

0386/1819 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Nil

0387/1819 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

- i) Members noted responses to questions posed at but not responded to at the previous meeting.

Mr A Daniels asked:

1. Who is the legal owner of the statues on the Arts Trail?

Written Response - The Town Council have agreed to be responsible for them over the life of the project. At the end of the project the Council will pass on the statues to the individual sponsors.

2. If it is the Council, how could any assurance ever have been given to the public that there would be no cost to the Council?

Written Response - I am not aware that the Town Council has given any such assurance. The Council agreed to facilitate the project provided that all direct costs were covered by sponsorship

3. If they are privately owned, will the owners be responsible for any cost of their removal over and above the sum set aside for their removal, should any such cost arise?

Written Response – Not applicable due to the response to question 2.

4. In the application for funds for the commission and erection of a further five statues on the Arts Trail from the Rural Development Programme for Europe, it is stated that Bridgnorth Town Council owns 20 hectares (above 50 acres) of grass for cropping. Where is this land, and what is its current use?

Written Response – The Town Council owns various pieces of land be that freehold, leasehold or under license including; the cemetery, Severn Park, Pale Meadow, Well Meadow, Crown Meadow, Bandon Lane and the Grove. In completing the expression of interest form an estimate was made of the areas where the Council staff cut grass.

Mr R Richards asked:

1. Is it possible to have sight of the Freedom of Information Act requests received by the Council?

Town Council Written Response - It is not necessarily possible to have sight of the Freedom of Information (FOI) requests that are submitted to the Council, for the following reasons:

Not all requests for FOI are considered to be within the legislation; some might be Subject Access Requests and are protected under Data Protection legislation and, some might be general enquiries about procedures or rational behind decisions, where we have no recorded data. In such cases the Council will respond, but not under FOI.

Your question has caused me to look into the publication of FOI responses provided by the Council. To my mind there is no reason why the Council responses to FOI requests are not published or readily available, subject to the redaction of personal data. I will look to discuss with the Council how that might be done in an effective and procedural manner.

- ii) Members noted the following written questions received in advance of the meeting.

Questions from Mr Richards of St. Leonard's Close

1. Does the Council know how many residents of Bridgnorth have not paid or are in arrears with their Council Tax, and by how much?

Response: No

2. Do arrears of residents affect the amount of money received by Bridgnorth Town Council from Shropshire Council?

Response: No

0388/1819 **MINUTES**

To approve the minutes of the Meeting of Bridgnorth Town Council Meeting held on Tuesday 6th November 2018.

RESOLVED:

The minutes of the Bridgnorth Town Council Meeting held on Tuesday 6th November 2018 be signed by the Chairman as a true record.

0389/1819 **TOWN MAYOR'S AND DEPUTY MAYOR'S DIARY**

Members noted that the Town Mayor and Mayoress and the Deputy Mayor had attended the following since the last Town Council meeting:

Mayor and Mayoress

20/10 Arts Trail Presentation at Library
20/10 Freemans Ball at Punch Bowl
21/10 Wellington Festival reception and concert
22/10 Opening of Bandon Arms after refit.
27/10 Council Surgery at library
1/11 Little Greenhouse Childrens Nursery
2/11 Mayors Charity Quiz Night (£650 raised)
3/11 Ladies Lunch Day at BRFC
8/11 Oldbury Wells Sixth Form launch (Mayoress only)
11/11 Remembrance Services

0390/1819 **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Members were advised that Mr John James has announced his retirement from the post of Bridgnorth Town Crier. Members were keen to acknowledge his outstanding contribution over 17 years. The Mayor advised that he had written to Mr James on behalf of the Council expressing those sentiments.

Members received a copy of a written report from Shropshire Councillor, Cllr Winwood.

Cllr C Whittle had requested that the following comments be minuted:

My thanks go to Mr Barry Ince who, when acting as Town Clerk, found that Council had not invoiced Shropshire County Council for work we had undertaken for them since 2013. Due to his vigilance and the support of our RFO, Mrs Ros Williams, I note that we have now received the previously un-invoiced £52,000.

I wish to thank and congratulate Councillor Kirstie Hurst-Knight for all the effort and time she has put into making our Remembrance Day Celebrations such a huge success, for getting retailers and the community involved and for improving the council's relationship with Bridgnorth British Legion.

0391/1819 **MEMBERS QUESTION TIME**

There were no Members questions.

0392/1819 **FINANCE**

i) Accounts Paid – October 2018

RESOLVED: that the accounts amounting to £113,605.90 be retrospectively approved for payment.

ii) Balance Sheet

Members noted the balance sheet.

iii) Town Council Bank Reconciliation Statement

Members noted the bank reconciliation statement.

iv) Budget Summary report

Members noted the Budget Summary report.

v) Receipts and Payments Summary

Members noted the in-year receipts and payments summary as at 31st October 2018.

vi) Accounts for Payment

RESOLVED: that the accounts amounting to £32,142.31 be approved for payment.

0393/1819 **INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT**

RESOLVED: to accept the 1st Interim Internal Audit report for Year End 2018/2019, noting the Auditors comments and subsequent action being taken by Officers

0394/1819 **LOW TOWN COMMUNITY HALL**

i) Accounts for Payment

RESOLVED: that the accounts amounting to £2,151.08 be approved for payment.

0395/1819 **BUDGET**

Members considered the budget report prepared by the RFO and the draft budget summary.

Members were generally of the view that the budget aspirations were reasonable (i.e. the increases and decreases described in the report seemed reasonable). However, they noted that the predicted increase in the 'band D equivalent' rate was projected at over 4.5% and that there was no increase in the general reserve. While there were some differences about the acceptable percentage level of increase, some suggesting 0% and others significantly more, there was a general feeling that a figure of around 2% would be palatable, along with some increase in the level of the general reserve from its 1 Apr 18 starting point of £149K.

It was acknowledged that an increase in income (through an increase in some or all of the Council fees) would help contribute to reducing the percentage increase and that the Clerk should prepare an appropriate level of fees. Some consolidation of room hire fees was also suggested.

The RFO would revise the draft budget to provide some options that might satisfy the general ambitions of the Council.

0396/1819 **STANDING ORDERS**

RESOLVED:

To defer the decision on the adoption of the draft model standing orders until the next meeting of the Council, to allow an appropriate amount of time to consider a lengthy document.

Members were asked to provide comment to the Clerk no later than Monday 26th November.

0397/1819 **POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER TOWN & PARISH COUNCIL SURVEY**

Members noted the correspondence and report documenting the results of the Town and Parish Council survey.

Members then had a general discussion about a number of policing related matters and asked that the Clerk invite an appropriate senior police officer to a future Council meeting.

0398/1819 **BRIDGNORTH ARTS TRAIL MINUTES**

Members noted the draft minutes of the Bridgnorth Arts Trail Working Group meeting held on 8th October 2018.

0399/1819 **ADDITIONAL CCTV**

Members noted a report from the Town Clerk and correspondence from the Community Enablement Team at Shropshire Council regarding the delay in installing CCTV in the area of St Mary's Church.

In reaching its decision in May 2018 to part fund the project the Council did not identify a budget line from which the expenditure should be taken. The Council in effect made a grant. The grants budget (Nominal Ledger 4800 Cost Centre 120) is fully spent this year. An increase in the grant budget is necessary to fund the May 2018 decision.

RESOLVED:

that Nominal Ledger 4800 Cost Centre 120 (Grants, Other) be increased by £677 to £5,677 to contribute to the funding of additional CCTV on Crown Meadow and by St Mary's Church.

0400/1819 **BRIDGE WEIGHT RESTRICTION**

Members considered a proposal from Cllr Hinton that Bridgnorth Town Council writes to Shropshire Council requesting a weight restriction of 7.5T on the Bridge.

Discussion considered wider traffic issues and road safety concerns.

The resolution was withdrawn and Members asked the Clerk to contact a senior officer at the Highways Department to voice the general concerns that came out of the discussion including:

- The integrity of the historic bridge in Low Town.
- The possibility of improved signage to discourage HGV's unnecessarily proceeding through the middle of Town.
- The levels of pollution.
- General congestion in the area in the entrance roads and roundabouts.

0401/1819 **INCOME & EXPENDITURE REPORT**

Members noted receipt of an income & expenditure report as at 31 Oct 2018 and an explanation of significant variances against the budget.

0402/1819 **AUDIT OF BANK STATEMENTS**

Members considered a report from the RFO to improve the internal audit process.

RESOLVED: to audit and sign all original bank statements alongside the monthly bank reconciliation statements. This task is to be undertaken by two Councillors when signing the monthly cheques and authorising payroll.

0403/1819 **COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW**

Members considered a draft petition prepared by the CGR working group members.

RESOLVED: to approve the draft petition and accompanying map and for it to be available to obtain signatures should Shropshire Council not support the Town Council request for a Community Governance Review.

0404/1819 **PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSION TO MEETINGS) ACT 1960**

RESOLVED in terms of Schedule 12A, Local Government Act 1972, the following items will be likely to disclose exempt information relating to establishment and contractual matters and it is, therefore, **RESOLVED** that pursuant to the provisions of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 the public and press be excluded.

0405/1819 **TOWN COUNCIL DEBTORS**

Members considered a report from the RFO and **RESOLVED:**

To note a debtors report and approve the actions being undertaken to address unpaid invoices due to the Town Council.