

## BRIDGNORTH TOWN COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Meeting of Bridgnorth Town Council held in the Mayor's Parlour,  
College House on Tuesday 20th February 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, D Cooper, G Davies, R Fox, A Hinton,  
Mrs H Howell, Mrs K Hurst-Knight, E Marshall,  
Mrs J Onions, Mrs S Stevens, Mrs C Walden and  
Mrs C Whittle

In Attendance: Acting Town Clerk, Mr B Ince  
One member of the press  
Twelve members of the public  
Rev.Preb. Simon Cawdell  
Minutes' Secretary and transcribed by Mrs R Williams

Prior to the meeting, a presentation was made by West Mercia Search and Rescue.

**0676/1718 FIRE SAFETY ANNOUNCEMENT**

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

**0677/1718 RECORDING OF MEETINGS**

The Chairman informed the meeting that recording, including filming, audio recording, taking photographs, blogging, tweeting and using other social media websites is permitted at Council meetings which are open to the public - however, anyone wishing to do is requested to speak to the Town Council staff prior to the meeting as there are rules which must be followed.

**0678/1718 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

- i) There were no apologies for absence.
- (ii) No formal approval of the reasons for absence for the purposes of S85 Local Government Act 1972 was required.

**0679/1718 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**Personal Interest

Councillor Mrs H Howell	Item 6	St Mary's Churchyard
	Item 33	Land off Mill Street
Councillor Mrs C Baines	Item 25	Hire of Council Properties

0680/1718 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**Question from Resident 1

I understand that one of the reasons for the proposed changes to the Events Working Party is to improve financial control. Could the Mayor give some examples of where the Working Party has actually committed the Council's financial resources rather than merely suggested a course of action for approval by the Council?

Answer

I believe I can. To the best of my recollection, following some checks of previous agendas and querying with staff, it has been the practice that the Events Committee notes of meetings (NOT minutes) have been noted by Council, not adopted or approved.

Similarly, to the best of my recollection, the Events Calendar presented to the last meeting of Council is the first time it has been presented in this form where Council were asked to 'consider and confirm/note' the calendar. I believe the previous practice has, as with meeting notes, just been to note.

Therefore proper governance of Council expenditure appears not to have taken place.

Question from Resident 2

Would the Town Council consider handing over the running of the Carnival to a community group set up for this purpose? This would remove cost from the Town Council whilst retaining the event for the public.

Answer

I believe Council may well be prepared to consider a proposal to take over the running of the carnival from a properly constituted Community Group, but it is not for me to say.

Question from Resident 3

I have been informed recently, that there has been speculation around the town, that a Town Councillor is under investigation. Does the council know anything more relating to this speculation or rumour or are they prepared to deny there is any basis to such speculation and rumour?

Answer

Council Members do not, but the Deputy Mayor and I do. Until the last few days we have not been able to say anything due to a Police investigation. However I am now able to respond. I should make it clear that because Council have not been aware of this it is I, and the Deputy Mayor who make this response.

In October last year a phone call was received from one of our regular event organisers asking if it was true that the Town Clerk had been sacked and that some events were being cancelled.

The organiser advised that he had received a telephone call apparently from a member of the Chamber of Commerce telling him of the sacking, telling him that some events were being cancelled and that the Chamber had been asked to look at taking up the slack.

Thinking that there might be cause for concern and that events might be adversely affected, in my absence the Deputy Mayor dealt with the matter from the outset and due to the delicacy of the matter he did not inform me for some time. The event organiser was told that the Clerk had not been sacked and that there was no suggestion that any events were under threat.

The organiser was asked if he had, by any chance, got the number that made the call. He confirmed that not only did he have the number but he also recorded all his calls. He initially provided the telephone number and this number was recognised.

At this stage it was not known who had actually made that call. To clarify the matter and to see if any criminal offence had occurred, the Police were informed. A few days later a copy of the recording of that telephone conversation was received and forwarded to the Police. The voice of the caller was readily identifiable.

The caller gave a false name (Tony Bennett) and frequently mentioned that he was speaking on behalf of Bridgnorth Chamber of Commerce. The caller is, to the best of our knowledge, not a member of that organisation and had no right to speak on behalf of the Bridgnorth Chamber of Commerce.

Due to the fact that the event organiser, whom Police had identified as the victim, did not wish to pursue this matter the Police have, within the last few days, decided to take no further action.

I would have been bringing this matter to Council for them to consider what action they may wish to take, but action is not now necessary. However I think it very important that Council and the public are made aware of the harm this could have caused to the Council's reputation, to our events programme and the Chamber of Commerce had the caller not been identifiable.

Copies of the transcript of the telephone conversation and the recording of the telephone conversation can be made available to Members and, if they wish, I can give more details in confidential session.

I have been in touch with the event organiser to apologise to him for any inconvenience and I shall also be making contact with the Chamber of Commerce, who have not yet been informed of this, to offer a similar apology and to make it clear that neither Council as a whole nor its staff had any role to play in this matter

0681/1718 **ST MARY'S CHURCHYARD**

**RESOLVED:** that Standing Orders be suspended for 10 to 15 minutes to allow a presentation by Rev.Preb Simon Cawdell and residents questions.

Plans were shown to the meeting highlighting the proposed car parking spaces at St Marys churchyard; 7 in total. The spaces would be for patrons of the church only and not for public use. There would be a fixed chain at the entrance to prevent unauthorised access. The area is to be bounded by 1 foot posts and rails to preserve the open aspect of the churchyard. The meeting was informed that the church has a duty to make reasonable provision for people to access the church and it has become apparent that this is a problem for mobility impaired patrons.

Rev.Preb Simon Cawdell informed the meeting that it is also planned to create a Garden of Remembrance that could be used for the interment of ashes.

Concerns were raised by members of the public with regard to existing grave plots. It was stated that no graves would be disturbed, the grave stones would be lifted and placed along a current wall within the churchyard. Concerns were also raised about road safety due to the close proximity to the entrance of Castle Grounds and limited access. A turning circle is been created to alleviate this problem. The maintenance of the age old cobble stones would fall to the County Council as part of highways.

The meeting went back into closed session.

Members were asked to consider a motion from Councillor A Hinton to oppose parking on St. Mary's churchyard. It was suggested that the motion be withdrawn to allow discussions and decisions to be made when the formal planning consent is submitted to the Planning Committee by Shropshire Council including maintenance costs of the new parking area. This will then be brought to full Council for consideration.

0682/1718 **REPORT FROM SHROPSHIRE COUNCIL**

The following report from Shropshire Councillor Les Winwood was read out at the meeting:

'I wish to thank the Town Council Members and staff for joining in on the monthly litter pick. It is certainly making a difference.

The footbridge to the Severn Valley Railway from New Road is now open and temporary repairs completed so that it will be open for the tourist season. A more permanent solution will be carried out at a later date and frequent checks will be made to monitor the bridge safety.

The next LJC Planning meeting will be held at Cantern Brook at 7pm on 7 March 2018.

The new Highways Maintenance contract and Highways Street Scene contract start on 1 April 2018. The new contractor is Kier.

Residents have asked Shropshire Council to improve the pavement by taking the foliage back along the route to Oldbury Village. This will be looked at in the near future.

The Arboricultural team have been asked to check the safety of the trees on Oldbury Wells bank on the left as you approach the school. Safety concerns have been raised by the residents. Officers will be writing to the owner, Mr Deighton.

A replacement sign on the Hookfield will be replaced shortly for those who have reported the damage to the original sign.

If you have any queries please do not wait for a Town Council meeting, I will help anytime if I can.

Arriva has taken back the 436 bus service from Easy Coach, who pulled out of the service soon after Christmas. Shropshire Council will be re-tendering the route again shortly. Feedback is that the service has improved under Arriva.

The Local Plan review is progressing. The results from the initial consultation should be published towards the end of next month.

The review of the greenbelt is progressing but this review is a much longer process.'

0683/1718 **MINUTES**

- i) The minutes of the Meeting of Bridgnorth Town Council held on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> February 2018 at 7.15pm were submitted as circulated.

**RESOLVED:** that the minutes of the Meeting of Bridgnorth Town Council held on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> February 2018 be signed by the Chairman as a true record.

0684/1718 **MATTERS ARISING**

There were no matters arising.

0685/1718 **TOWN MAYOR'S AND DEPUTY MAYOR'S DIARY**

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

Mayor's Diary

27<sup>th</sup> January – West Mercia Search and Rescue Open Day  
30<sup>th</sup> January – Launch of the 2018 programme at The Bridge  
10<sup>th</sup> February – Mayor of Stourport Poet's Evening  
11<sup>th</sup> February – Whitchurch Civic Service

0686/1718 **MEMBERS QUESTION TIME**

There were no Members questions.

0687/1718 **COMMITTEE MINUTES**

- i) The minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on Monday 5<sup>th</sup> February 2018 were submitted as circulated.

**RESOLVED:** that the minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on Monday 5<sup>th</sup> February 2018 be received and adopted.

0688/1718 **MATTERS ARISING FROM COMMITTEE MINUTES**

There were no matters arising.

0689/1718 **FINANCE**

- i) Accounts for Payment

Members were asked to authorise the signing of invoices for payment and those invoices paid in between meetings.

**RESOLVED:** that the accounts amounting to £69,187.09 be approved for payment.

- ii) Income and Expenditure Reports

- i) Income and Expenditure Report

**RESOLVED:** that the income and expenditure report be noted.

Account Code Report

i) Budget Report

**RESOLVED:** that the account code budget report be noted.

ii) Earmarked Reserves Report

**RESOLVED:** that the account code earmarked reserves report be noted.

iii) Report from Mrs R Williams

**RESOLVED:** that the report from Mrs R Williams be noted.

iv) Level of Reserves

**RESOLVED:** that the level of the Town Council's reserves of £631,539 be noted.

v) Town Council Bank Reconciliation Statement

**RESOLVED:** that the Town Council Bank Reconciliation Statement be noted.

0690/1718 **LOW TOWN COMMUNITY HALL**

i) Accounts for Payment

**RESOLVED:** that the accounts amounting to £3,000.93 be approved for payment and that in future, accounts for payment should be brought to Council for approval.

0691/1718 **INTERNAL AUDIT**

**RESOLVED:** to receive the interim update Internal Audit Report for 2017/2018

0692/1718 **GRANTS 2017**

Members sighted and noted a synopsis of how the grants for 2017 were spent by the various organisations who had received them.

0693/1718 **TOWN COUNCIL NEWSLETTER**

Members were asked to consider a report regarding costings for publishing the Town Council newsletter in the What's What Magazine.

**RESOLVED:** to accept the quote from What's What magazine for a single page newsletter at a cost of £525 plus VAT per edition.

0694/1718 **REQUEST TO USE SPACE UNDER THE TOWN HALL FOR AN EVENT**

Members were informed that Bridgnorth Rotary are holding their annual “Up Steps Walk” on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> October 2018 and would like to request the use of the space under the Town Hall to start the race and to set up three tables for administration. This would be from 1pm until 5pm.

**RESOLVED:** to allow Bridgnorth Rotary the use of the space under the Town Hall, free of charge, for the “Up Steps Walk” on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> October 2018.

0695/1718 **ELECTION OF ADDITIONAL MEMBER FOR THE PLANNING COMMITTEE**

Nominations were invited to join the Planning Committee. This will be considered once the election has taken place and there is a new Councillor in situ.

0696/1718 **BRIDGNORTH CLUB FOR YOUNG PEOPLE – MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR E MARSHALL**

Members were asked to submit a request to the Trustees of the Bridgnorth Club for Young People to provide information, to include financial information and their future plans and intentions for undertaking youth club type activities, and for the Mill Street Studios. Also to invite the Trustees to meet with the Council to discuss their current situation and future plans, and possibly to make a presentation to a Council Meeting in the very near future. Members agreed the above and the Trustees are to be invited.

0697/1718 **REMEDIAL TREE WORKS IN THE CEMETERY**

Members were requested to consider the two quotes below for the remainder of the remedial tree works resulting from the December snow damage.

- Lewis Arborcare Ltd £2,250.00 Plus VAT
- All Seasons Tree Services £1,710.00 Plus VAT

**RESOLVED:** to accept the quote, in the sum of £1,710.00 plus VAT, from All Seasons Tree Services

0698/1718 **COMMENTS ON FACEBOOK – MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR E MARSHALL**

Members were asked to consider and adopt a motion with regard to posting on social media: Facebook.

Members felt that some recent comments made on local Facebook groups, with regard to the Town Council, were unacceptable. It was acknowledged that Facebook could be an excellent tool if used correctly.



**RESOLVED:** to adopt the following motion:

‘Bridgnorth Town Council is committed to openness and transparency and is an ardent supporter of the rights of everyone to Freedom of Expression. However, this Council is most concerned about the tone of some comments that in recent weeks have appeared on Facebook, and in particular the unacceptable personal abuse of the Mayor and some others. Anyone can enquire, challenge and criticise, but the community would flourish and be much more friendly and significantly better if basic rules of politeness and courtesy were followed. This Council, through the actions of its’ elected Members, commits to uphold an environment and culture that encourages people to consider standing or working as a councillor and is opposed to anything that would frighten or otherwise discourage anyone from being a councillor.’

There was a recorded vote: For: Unanimous

0699/1718 **BUS SERVICE CONSULTATION**

Members were asked to consider the bus service consultation for the 297 – Bridgnorth to Kidderminster.

**RESOLVED:** to confirm to Shropshire Council that the Town Council are in approval of the intended timetable that was published.

0700/1718 **HIRE OF COUNCIL PROPERTIES/MEETING FACILITIES**

Following discussions held previously regarding the use of Town Council properties/meeting facilities, Members were asked to consider a report on organisations that historically had not been charged for use of room hire.

**RESOLVED:** that any meetings arranged by the Town Council are free of charge. Any other meetings will need Town Council approval if a request is received to use the facilities free of charge.

Councillor Ms S Barlow left the meeting at this point; 9.15pm

0701/1718 **COMMITTEES**

i) Personnel Committee

Members were asked to consider a proposal that a Personnel Committee be established, to include delegated powers of Council, with the following Terms of Reference:

1. To establish and keep under review the staffing structure in consultation with Council.
2. To draft, implement, monitor and review staff policies.
3. To establish and review salary pay scales for all categories of staff and to be responsible for their administration and review. \*

4. To oversee the recruitment and appointment of staff within the agreed establishment.
5. To arrange execution of new employment contracts and changes to same.
6. To establish and review performance management (including annual staff appraisals) and staff training programmes.
7. To keep under review staff working conditions and health and safety matters.
8. To oversee any formal disciplinary matters including those leading to dismissal of staff (including redundancy). \*
9. To monitor and address regular or sustained staff absence.
10. To make recommendations to Council on staffing related expenditure.
11. To consider any appeal against a decision in respect of pay.
12. To consider a grievance or disciplinary matter. Any related appeal should be considered by Council.
13. To handle any grievance, disciplinary matter and pay disputes in respect of the Clerk.

An amended proposal was circulated to Members at this point. Following a discussion it was felt that this item should be deferred to the next meeting of Council due to the large amount of information for Members to consider.

ii) Establishment of a Finance Committee

Members were asked to consider the following:

- (i) To agree the establishment of a Finance Committee.
- (ii) To consider and if thought appropriate, adopt the following Terms of Reference:
  1. To monitor the Council's financial performance against budget and to consider any variations to forecast out-turn for the financial year which may be necessary. Monitoring will normally take place quarterly but may be carried out more frequently if considered necessary, reviews of forecast financial out-turn will normally take place at least once during the financial year at a time appropriate to annual budget preparation.
  2. To consider the soundness of budget proposals and related financial risks and opportunities.
  3. To review the Council's prospective long term financial position in the light of emerging trends and strategic decisions taken by the Council about its services, activities and capital program.
  4. To consider and make recommendations on the appropriate level of, and use of, reserves.

5. To consider opportunities for external grant funding, including the appropriate use of Community Infrastructure Levy receipts.
  6. To consider any proposals for borrowing or leasing arrangements.
  7. To consider and keep under review any investments, deposit funds, and banking arrangements.
  8. To consider the financial implications of proposals for changes in council services or activities, including the acquisition or disposal of assets.
  9. To monitor debtors and action being taken, payment disputes with suppliers, and insurance claims.
  10. To review proposed budget virements on behalf of the Council.
  11. To consider and make recommendations on changes to the Council's Financial Regulations.
  12. To monitor the implementation of any changes to financial procedures required as a result of reports from the Council's internal or external auditors.
- (iii) To appoint members to the Finance Committee (at least 3 and not more than 6, as per the draft Terms of Reference).

Although not all Members were in agreement that a Finance Committee was needed they did feel strongly that a different approach was needed with regard to the presentation of the financial information. The Mayor will discuss this with RBS to ascertain if this can be improved.

There was a recorded vote for the proposal of establishing a Finance Committee:

For: Councillors Mrs C Baines, Dr J Buckley, D Cooper, R Fox and Mrs H Howell.  
 Against: Councillors G Davies, A Hinton, Mrs K Hurst-Knight, E Marshall, Mrs J Onions, Mrs S Stevens, R Whittle, Mrs C Walden and Mrs C Whittle.

The proposal was lost.

At this point in the meeting, it was **RESOLVED:** that Standing Orders be suspended to allow the meeting to continue over the 2.5 hour limit.

0702/1718 **BANK MANDATES**

Members were asked to confirm the following amendments to the bank mandates:

Unity Trust Bank:

- i) Removal of one signatory and former Town Clerk
- ii) Addition of Barry Ince, Acting Town Clerk, for both telephone and internet banking; view and submit payments only

HSBC

- i) Removal of former Town Clerk
- ii) Addition of Barry Ince, Acting Town Clerk
- iii) Update of all 15 Councillors

**RESOLVED:** to accept the above amendments.

0703/1718 **CONCESSIONS**

Members were asked to consider a synopsis of quotations received for the Concessions contract Severn Park for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019.

**RESOLVED:** to accept the following quotations for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019:

Light refreshments	Stuarts Place	£450.00
Childrens Entertainment	R Jennings	£800.00
Ice Cream	Midland Super Cream	£4,400.00

0704/1718 **FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUESTS RECEIVED**

- i) Relating to Shropshire Council HR contract

0705/1718 **CONFERENCE/MEETING UPDATES**

From Councillors

- i) Notes from the Fairtrade Meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2018

Members noted the report.

- ii) Notes from the Bridgnorth and District Twinning Association meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2018

Members noted the report.

0706/1718 **PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSIONS 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.

0707/1718 **BRIDGNORTH RUGBY CLUB**

**RESOLVED:** to reconfirm the decision already taken and to modify the Agreement to include; that Bridgnorth Rugby club accepts a full repair liability for a period of no less than 4 years regardless of reason, that they further maintain and resource the building for a period up to but no less than 10 years for normal wear and tear but not for any acts of significant vandalism, and that the specification of that building is agreed by Bridgnorth Town Council prior to installation.

Councillor C Walden left the meeting at 9.55pm

There was a recorded vote:

For: Councillors R Whittle, A Hinton, G Davies, J Onions, K H Knight, C Whittle, S Stevens and E Marshall.

Abstained: Councillors H Howell, C Baines, D Cooper, J Buckley and R Fox.

0708/1718 **LAND OFF MILL STREET ADJACENT TO THE CEMETERY**

**RESOLVED:** that as the land is no longer used, that the Town Council write to Bridgnorth Housing Trust to investigate the termination of the lease at the end of the current lease period.

0709/1718 **TOWN COUNCIL DEBTORS**

**RESOLVED:** to accept the list of debtors as listed at Appendix S.

0710/1718 **PERSONNEL MATTERS**

**RESOLVED:** to agree the honorarium payments made to two members of staff.

**RESOLVED:** that due to the current circumstances, a staff member was to be paid for two weeks outstanding leave at a rate of pay based on the staff members existing salary.

The meeting closed at 10.30pm