

**BRIDGNORTH TOWN COUNCIL**

**Minutes of the Meeting of Bridgnorth Town Council held remotely via Zoom  
Video-Conferencing on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> January 2021 at 7.15pm**

(Draft until signed at a subsequent meeting)

Present:

Councillors:

S Barlow (Chair)  
C Baines  
J Buckley  
D Cooper  
G Davies  
C Dyson  
R Fox  
H Howell  
E Marshall  
K Sawbridge  
S Stevens  
C Walden  
C Whittle  
R Whittle

In Attendance:

L Jakeman, Town Clerk  
R Williams, Responsible Finance Officer

(Note: several members of the public also attended virtually)

0188/2021 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Councillors:

K Hurst-Knight, unwell

0189/2021 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Nil

0190/2021 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

Written Questions submitted prior to publication of the agenda

Questions from Annette Hughes

1. Can the Council confirm how much public money has been invested in total this financial year (2020-21) on Cemetery Lodge?
2. What process was used to select the new tenant for Cemetery Lodge?
3. Who was selected?
4. If an elected Councillor became a tenant of a Town Council property would they be required to declare a pecuniary interest before voting to agree a 0% rent increase for the financial year 2021-22?

Deputy Town Mayor's Response:

The Town Clerk advises that you (Annette Hughes) recently submitted a Freedom of Information (FOI) request to the Town Council asking similar questions and those responses are still appropriate and repeated below:

The Town Council has spent £4,489.68 (including VAT) on materials to refurbish the Cemetery Lodge. However, the Council is able to recover the VAT and therefore the net cost will have been £3741.40.

With regard to labour costs these were borne by the Town Council's in house property maintenance team in between other routine or essential tasks. It is not possible to accurately confirm how many hours were spent on the Cemetery Lodge as the work is recorded on timesheets as 'Cemetery Grounds'. While much of the work that took place in the 'Cemetery Grounds' can be attributed to the Cemetery Lodge, some of the work will have been in support of funerals and works on the staff canteen, the cemetery office and other facilities in and around the Cemetery. However estimated labour costs range from at least £5,000 up to a maximum of £10,000. The management cost for the letting agent is 10% per month of the rent). A standard set up fee of £250 was also paid to the letting agent.

The entire process of letting the property was managed by a letting agent who advertised the property as being for rent and they sifted suitable applicants.

With regard to the name of the tenant, that information is considered to be exempt under section 40(2) of the Act as it is personal data of a third party.

With regard to your 4<sup>th</sup> question, which was not part of your previous FOI request; (the matter of declaring a pecuniary interest); it is for each councillor to consider (themselves) whether they have an in interest and in turn need whether they need to declare an interest on in any item on any agenda at any Council meeting.

### Question from Charlotte Round

“I have seen a photograph of the mayor in town with local MP Philip Dunne where they were chatting in a doorway whilst in the following doorway there was a homeless man. There have been an increase in rough sleepers in our town and can I ask what the mayor is doing to support this vulnerable people during not only a very cold winter but in the midst of a global pandemic?”

### Deputy Town Mayor's Response:

Public Questions at Town Council meetings should only relate to matters of policy or practice (*of the Council*) and in this case it is not appropriate for me to respond. Questions for individual councillors should be addressed to them directly.

#### 0191/2021 **MINUTES**

- i) Members noted receipt of the draft minutes of the Meeting of Bridgnorth Town Council held on Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> December 2020.

**RESOLVED: to approve the minutes of the Meeting of Bridgnorth Town Council held on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2020.**

- ii) Members noted receipt of the draft minutes of the Personnel Committee held on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2020.

#### 0192/2021 **MAYOR AND DEPUTY MAYOR'S DIARY**

Members noted the Mayor and Deputy Mayor's diaries since the last meeting:

##### Mayor's Diary

- 16/12 Urgent social distancing review meeting Shropshire Council
- 19/12 Raffle draw Mike and Sarah's butchers for Search and rescue
- 23/12 Visit to local high street businesses with Philip Dunne MP
- 25/12 Together at Christmas
- 22/12 Meeting with Dr Swallow re vaccine program for Bridgnorth / surrounding areas

##### Deputy Mayor's Diary

- 24/12 Visit to residents on Doctors Lane re flooding

#### 0193/2021 **MEMBERS QUESTION TIME**

Nil

i) Accounts Paid – December 2020

Members received notification of items which had been paid in accordance with Financial Regulation 5.5.

**RESOLVED: that the accounts amounting to £51,022.17 be retrospectively approved for payment.**

ii) Cashbooks 1, 2 & 3

Members noted receipt of Cashbooks 1, 2 & 3.

iii) Budget Report

Members noted the Budget Summary report, including Earmarked Reserves.

iv) Balance Sheet

Members noted the balance sheet as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020 (£716,619) comprising:

General Fund	£389,944
Ear Marked Reserves	£141,684
Useable Capital Receipts	£184,991

v) Town Council Bank Reconciliation Statements

Members noted the bank reconciliation statements as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020.

vi) Receipts and Payments Summary

Members noted the in-year receipts and payments summary as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020.

vii) Accounts for Payment

Members noted receipt of a list of payments for approval.

**RESOLVED: that the accounts amounting to £15,161.28 be approved for payment.**

(Clerk's Note: Cllrs S Barlow and E Marshall to sign cheques on behalf of Town Council)

viii) Accounting and Audit

Members are noted that Councillors K Hurst-Knight and R Whittle, on Friday 18 December 2020, verified/signed the bank statements for November 2020, authorised payroll for December 2020 and signed those cheques approved by Council at the meeting held on 15 December 2020.

ix) Community Hall Annual Management Fee

At its previous meeting in December 2020 members agreed to defer the decision on whether to waive some of its management fee for the current financial year.

**RESOLVED: to waive £5,000 of the FY 2020/21 management fee (charged by the Town Council) for the running of the Bridgnorth Community Hall.**

0195/2021 **APPROVAL OF TOWN COUNCIL FEES**

**RESOLVED: to agree the revised list of fees for 2021/2022.**

(Members noted that some fees are proposed to remain at the same level as 2020/2021 with the following exceptions: administrative costs are to be increased by 2.75% and market fees are to be increased by 15%).

0196/2021 **PRECEPT/BUDGET SETTING FOR FY 2021/2022**

Members considered a number of budgets (nearly all of which had been materially affected by the earlier decision of the Council to waive part of the management fee charged to the Bridgnorth Community Hall). There was some lengthy discussion around the levels of budget for Grants (e.g. whether to increase it from £11,175 and Public Toilets and whether to include the likely rates reduction). A number of proposals were made to support various published options; each of which required some modification in light of the earlier decision and additional information (on public toilets rates).

*(Clerk's Note: The Clerk and the RFO advised that the purpose of identifying a budget was to agree a level of precept to be levied on the residents (a cash figure) and that budgets would as ever need to remain fluid throughout the year).*

Informed by the RFO's proposed budget:

<u>Cost Centre</u>	<u>Heading</u>	<u>Income£</u>	<u>Expenditure£</u>
101	Central Costs	1,700	271,948
110	Civic & Democratic	0	21,860
120	Grants	0	11,175
205	College House	13,960	19,400
206	Annexe	500	2,590
210	Town Hall	30,750	11,650
211	Market	9,880	1,250

215	Northgate	1	2,185
230	Cemetery	51,210	7,352
231	Cemetery Lodge	5,500	1,500
248	Cyclical Repairs	0	7,000
249	Other Properties	15,240	3,000
250	Grounds	40,918	397,029
255	Allotments	1,000	638
260	Severn Park	50,873	49,530
285	Public Conveniences	250	36,703
291	Town Services	420	28,510
294	Projects and Improvements	0	15,000
296	Low Town Community Hall	20,400	0
299	Castle Hall	22,500	38,153
301	CCTV	0	12,495
302	Events	2,700	3,700
	<b>Totals</b>	<b>267,802</b>	<b>942,668</b>

**Members RESOLVED:**

To approve the issuing of the precept, requiring Shropshire Council to pay Bridgnorth Town Council £638,498 (six hundred and thirty-eight thousand, four hundred and ninety-eight pounds) to meet its expenditure for the financial year 2021/2022.

*(Clerk's Note: The agreed precept of £638,498, will result in an annual Band D equivalent rate of £140.53 for Bridgnorth residents, an increase in cash terms of £2.48 and a percentage increase of 1.79%).*

0197/2021 **INTERNAL AUDIT 2020/2021**

Members received the first interim Internal Audit report for 2020/2021 and noted the RFO's comments.

0198/2021 **TRANSFER TO EARMARKED RESERVES**

**RESOLVED:** to defer any decision on whether to authorise the transfer of £15,000 from Cost Centre Projects and Improvements – Cemetery Extension (294/4433) to Earmarked Reserve Cemetery Lane (327).

0199/2021 **QUARTERLY BUDGET MONITORING**

Members noted the quarterly budget monitoring report from the Finance Administrator.

0200/2021 **SEVERN PARK**

i) Temporary Toilets

Members noted that the planned provision for mobile toilets on Severn Park will be from 29 March to 30 September 2021 (27 weeks).

- ii) Concessions

**RESOLVED:**

- a. That the Town Council will permit up to 3 opportunities for concessions to trade from Severn Park (Light Refreshments, Ice Cream Van and Children's Entertainment).
- b. That a set level of minimum fees be required for any concession:
  - i) Ice Cream Van - £4,600
  - ii) Light refreshments - £1,200
  - iii) Children's Entertainment (e.g. Bouncy Castle) - £800

(Where there is more than one applicant, the RFO may ask for sealed bids – [*above the minimum fee*] - to be submitted or negotiate a best price.)

- c. That the Outdoor & Property Manager will have delegated authority to approve any concession and its location.
- d. That all concession payments should be made in advance. With the RFO being authorised to negotiate staged payments where the concession holder has a track record of paying promptly.

0201/2021 **OUTDOOR AND PROPERTIES MANAGER'S REPORT**

Members noted the report from the Outdoors and Property Manager, which provided a general overview of estate management matters.

0202/2021 **LOCAL PLAN REVIEW**

- i) Members noted that the deadline for responding to the Regulation 19 Consultation of the Local Plan Review is 5<sup>th</sup> February 2021 and that an Extraordinary Town Council meeting is likely to be held on Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> January to confirm/consider the Town Council's submission.
- ii) Members noted the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition of the Bridgnorth Plan produced by the Bridgnorth Plan Working Group and **RESOLVED:**

**That the Town Council gives its provisional support to the first edition of the Bridgnorth Town Plan produced by the Town Plan Steering Group.**

0203/2021 **TREE MAINTENANCE POLICY**

Members considered a draft Tree Maintenance Policy produced by the working group.

**RESOLVED: to adopt the Tree Maintenance Policy.**

0204/2021 **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.

0205/2021 **TOWN COUNCIL DEBTORS**

Members considered a report from the Responsible Financial Officer.

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

0206/2021 **PERSONNEL COMMITTEE**

Members noted the report and considered the recommendations.

**RESOLVED: to approve the recommendations contained within the Personnel Committee confidential report.**