

BRIDGNORTH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of Bridgnorth Town Council held in the Annexe, College House on Tuesday 19th October 2021 at 7.15pm

(Draft until signed at a subsequent meeting)

Present:

Councillors:

Barlow (Chair)
Aked
Baines MBE
Buckley
Buffey
Chetter (in part)
Connolly
D Cooper
N Cooper
Neal
Rochelle
Round (in part)
Sawbridge
Seabright (in part)
Wellings

In Attendance:

L Jakeman, Town Clerk
R Williams, Deputy Town Clerk

0193/2122 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Nil

0194/2122 **CASUAL VACANCY**

Members noted that Councillor G Colley had resigned from the Town Council and that Shropshire Council had been informed and a formal notice had been issued.

0195/2122 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Nil

Question received Mr R Richards

The Town Council has an end-of-year deficit of £66,473. What measures does the Council intend to take to rectify this situation without increasing the precept? What measures will the Council take to ensure it does not have a deficit at end of this year?

Town Clerk's Response

In responding I make the assumption that the deficit figure you quote of £66,473 is taken from the previous month's summary budget report. In this month's report that figure is shown as a deficit of £25,564. That figure is produced as a result of a number of assumptions; ones that are less well refined in the early part of the financial year than towards the end. Predicted spending and predicted income becomes more accurate the closer we get to 31st March as income and expenditure does not necessarily in a straight line (e.g. tree works are dependent upon weather – heavy snowfall might damage many trees a mild winter might mean much reduced expenditure; similarly heating bills are weather dependent; income from the car park on Severn Park can be severely affected by flooding and there is a tendency to be cautions about how much we might take from December through to February). There is a tendency to assume that most budgets will be spent to their maximum at this stage in the budget formulating process unless the entire spend is for a one-off item or standard subscription or a fixed fee (e.g. rates).

The Town Council does not operate a separate revenue and capital expenditure account, and as such some expenditure that might be considered capital expenditure is transacted from the general revenue account which in turn might be part funded by Earmarked Reserves. It is useful therefore to appreciate the levels of some of the more general Earmarked Reserves when budgeting.

It is not possible to answer your questions about not increasing the precept or not operating a deficit budget at this time, mostly because the Council as body has not discussed the budget as a whole for next year in any detail to date. It is likely that members will consider such things during the course of setting a budget over the coming months (and I turn the level of the precept), along with the requirement to identify the need for (and cost) of services and levels of general reserve. In setting the budget and the precept there will likely be a whole host of competing demands that members will wish to discuss, consider and prioritise over the coming months before reaching an outcome that it can agree on.

0197/2122 **MINUTES**

- i) **RESOLVED: to approve the minutes of the Meeting of Bridgnorth Town Council held on 21st September 2021.**
- ii) Members noted receipt of the minutes of the Events & Christmas Committee meeting held on 21st September 2021.
- iii) Members noted receipt of the minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 11th October 2021.

(Clerk's Note; Councillor Chetter arrives)

0198/2122 **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- i) Members noted the Mayor and Deputy Mayor's Diary detailing recent events:

Mayor's Diary

23 Sep	Innage Brunch Mobile Catering opening.
25 Sep	Board Game Café opening.
3 Oct	Christians Against Poverty debt centre opening.
4 Oct	Bridgnorth League of Friends AGM.
7 Oct	Castle Grounds rose plants donation and planting - courtesy of David Austin Roses.
10 Oct	Bridgnorth Sinfonia Concert – Castle Hall.
11 Oct	Innage Lane Youth Club – visit.
15 Oct	Castle Grounds – Year 7 students History activity.

0199/2122 **MEMBERS QUESTION TIME**

Nil

0200/2122 **FINANCE**

- i) Accounts Paid –September 2021

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

RESOLVED: that the accounts amounting to £53,009.42 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 30th September 2021 (£969,794*) comprising:

General Fund £628,868

Ear Marked Reserves £168,293

Useable Capital Receipts £172,633

(* Sub totals combined do not necessarily agree with overall total due to roundings)

v) Town Council Bank Reconciliation Statements

Members noted the bank reconciliation statements as at 30th September 2021.

vi) Receipts and Payments Summary

Members noted the in-year receipts and payments summary as at 30th September 2021.

vii) Accounts for Payment

Members noted receipt of a list of payments for approval.

i) **RESOLVED: that the accounts amounting to £11,804.81 be approved for payment.**

ii) **RESOLVED: to authorise Councillors Chetter and Sawbridge to sign the cheques relating to the authorised payments (on Friday 22nd October 2021)**

viii) Accounting and Audit

Members noted that Councillors S Barlow and J Buckley, on Friday 24th September 2021, verified/signed the bank statements for August 2021 and signed those cheques approved by Council at the meeting held on 21st September 2021. Councillors S Barlow and J Buckley authorised payroll for September 2021.

0201/2122 **COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

RESOLVED: that Councillor J Buckley be appointed to the Planning Committee.

RESOLVED: that Councillor N Cooper be appointed to the Events & Christmas Committee.

0202/2122 **BUDGET PREPARATION 2022/23**

Members received the first draft budget for financial year 2022/2023.

RESOLVED:

To form a budget working group to look at and scrutinise a stand still budget and provide a summary of decisions that the Council will need to take.

And

That the Budget Working Group comprises councillors Aked, Buckley, N Cooper, Rochelle, Sawbridge and Seabright.

(Clerk's Note: The WG members agreed that they would hold a meeting at College House)

0203/2122 **OUTDOOR & PROPERTY REPORT**

Members considered the report and noted ongoing and upcoming activity.

0204/2122 **WELCOME BACK FUND**

Members were advised that a site visit with Shropshire Council officers had occurred on Thursday 14th October to view the sites and works proposed by the Town Council as part of the Welcome Back grant funding scheme. We now await costings for the proposed works.

0205/2122 **YOUTH PROVISION**

Members noted correspondence from the Mayor to Youth service providers and agencies to attend a youth provision initial scoping meeting on 20th October 2021.

0206/2122 **SHROPSHIRE COUNCIL**

Members considered a report from the Town Clerk following a presentation by Shropshire Council officers on Monday 20th September 2021.

RESOLVED:

- i) **To agree to brand a forthcoming public engagement on a number of potential projects (discussed on Monday 20th September with Shropshire Council) as ‘Shropshire Council in partnership with and/or with the support of Bridgnorth Town Council’.**

And

- ii) **That the Town Council (initially through the Clerk) begin discussions with Shropshire Council’s Economic Growth and Strategy department about the perceived benefits of a Business Improvement District (BID) and the process.**

0207/2122 **BRIDGNORTH COMMUNITY HALL**

The Council (as Sole Trustee) noted the minutes of the Management Committee meeting of the Bridgnorth Community Hall held on Friday 8th October 2021, in particular its aspirations regarding the charity reforming as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation and consider a request that the management committee be expanded from 6 to 9 members.

(Clerk’s Note: in discussion it was enquired as to what the criteria for identifying/ appointing new members was intended to be. Members of the management committee present explained that recruitment to the committee was intended to be targeted at existing users of the Hall).

RESOLVED

“That The Town Council as the Sole Trustee authorises the Management Committee of the Bridgnorth Community Hall Charity Committee (currently 6 members) be expanded to up to 9 members, with the current management committee having delegated authority to appoint the new members.”

0208/2122 **FLOOD REACTION WORKING GROUP**

Members received a report of an initial meeting of the Flood Reaction Working Group (WG) held on 7th October 2021. Of particular note was the intention of the WG to hold an informal meeting with potentially affected residents on Saturday 6th November 2021 between 10am and 2pm at the Bridgnorth Community Hall in Low Town.

RESOLVED

‘That the sum of £500 be provided to cover printing costs, room hire, publications, refreshments and the like with costs being funded from the ‘Grants Others’ budget (Cost Centre 120, Nominal Ledger 4800)’

0209/2122 **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.

(Clerk’s note: While the discussions are confidential the decisions made are documented for the public record)

(Clerk’s note: Councillors Round and Seabright departed the meeting)

0210/2122 **TOWN COUNCIL DEBTORS**

RESOLVED: to note a debtors’ report and approve the actions being taken.

0211/2122 **HANGING BASKET AND BEDDING PLANT CONTRACT**

RESOLVED:

To extend the current contract (into a 2nd year) with Littlefords at the agreed fixed price of £11,891.50.

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