

BRIDGNORTH TOWN COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Meeting of Bridgnorth Town Council held in the Mayor's Parlour,
College House on Tuesday 20th August 2019 at 7.15pm**

Present:

Councillors:

R Whittle OBE (in the Chair)

C Baines MBE

S Barlow

J Buckley

D Cooper

G Davies

C Dyson

R Fox

H Howell

K Hurst-Knight

E Lynch

S Stevens

C Walden

C Whittle

In Attendance:

Mr L Jakeman, Town Clerk

Mrs R Williams, Responsible Finance Officer

0158/1920 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Members noted the apologies as listed below:

Councillor E Marshall – personal commitment

0159/1920 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr Walden declared a pecuniary interest in agenda item 22 Disputed Invoices.

0160/1920 **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Members were advised that Mr Elliott Lynch was elected to Bridgnorth Town Council (East Ward) to fill a casual vacancy following the poll on Thursday 1st August 2019 and welcomed him to his first meeting.

Members noted receipt of a Management report from the Town Clerk providing a general update on a number of recent, ongoing and upcoming matters of general interest, extract below:

The following is intended as a brief summary of matters that I have noted that might need some attention in the fullness of time and an update on ongoing projects as a way of filling gaps in knowledge and understanding of what happened following decisions of Council or indeed things that work well. The points are in no order of priority and it is not intended to cover all matters.

Cemetery Extension

- The Council is still working towards acquiring a piece of land to provide additional land. There are have been delays in obtaining an option agreement and it is unwise to proceed with a planning application for change of use (which will likely result in some significant spend) without having secured an option agreement. The Cemetery Extension Working Group might wish to meet in the autumn to be appraised in more detail of the current situation, but realistically there is little that can be done until the option agreement is completed. An application for CIL Local funding (£90k) has been approved in principle by Shropshire Council to support the project. The application is subject to a more detailed submission which will be completed in the next few weeks.

Photocopier Contract

- The lease of the current equipment is soon to expire. The Clerk and RFO are working on obtaining quotes and are minded to suggest purchasing the equipment. While the initial outlay might be more than the annual lease it is highly likely that the outright purchase (accompanied by an annual maintenance contract) will provide circa £2 - £4k of saving over 3 to 5 years.

CCTV

- The Council continues to provide CCTV for use by the police force in deterring and detecting crime. The cost to the Town Council (to support another public body – the police force -that has the power to precept) is significant. The servicing contract is being reviewed/ re-negotiated currently.

Castle Hall

- Significant investment (mostly heating related) has been undertaken in recent months.
- Usage appears to be on the rise.

- A significant amount of work has been undertaken – the roof above the toilets has now been sealed and the flashing has been repaired. As a consequence we have been able to re-decorate the gents toilets. In addition we are awaiting delivery of 5 replacement windows which will close properly and be more energy efficient; these will be fitted by our maintenance team. There still remains a large number of works to be carried out and their main focus at this time is on Castle Hall.
- A small but increasing income is being seen from the (contracted out) bar – a percentage of profits; mostly from show style events.
- Some investment in better chairs (more suitable for shows/plays etc) would likely encourage more use of the venue as a 'show venue'.

Town Hall

- The Town Hall has been open all bar one Saturday (from 10:15 to 12:30) since mid-April and this will continue to mid-September. From mid-May thru to the end of August the Town Hall has also been open on Wednesdays (from 11:00 to 16:00).
- There have been 553 recorded visits by the public to date and since April 2019. In addition to public opening the Town Hall has been booked by visitor (tourist) groups twice as well as hosting a School visit. A small number of weddings have also taken place and a couple are planned.
- Donations of over £200 have been received.
- A virtual Tour of the Building can be taken by visiting the Town Council website.

College House

- The Toilets in the Annexe have been redecorated/ improved and the building is now more suitable for renting out. The Carpet could do with replacing and replacing the tables and chairs will need to be considered if we are to maximise the use of the Annex. It probably has potential to be used for Council meetings (which would free up much needed space for the Council's administrative function).

Severn Park

- I still maintain previous concerns that The Council does not own it yet seeks to invest in it heavily. The annual lease is a significant cost to the Bridgnorth resident. If the Council is likely to want the space forever then it should seriously begin to consider purchasing it

- The Playground equipment on Severn Park has been replaced or refurbished, other than the rope climbing frame. When replacing the rope frame the contractor advised that the central metal pole might not be suitable any more. The contractor is investigating the structural integrity of the pole and is looking to offer a solution. It might be that a new pole is required; the matter will need to be brought back to Council if additional costs (above the original tender) are incurred.
- We have delivered with the help of Shropshire Council (both in practical and financial terms) the re-surfacing of the entrance funnel and the internal road that leads to the gravel car park.

Climate Emergency

- Advisory Group members have met with Council staff and have begun the process of understanding the Council's work and its carbon output. An initial report is likely to be tabled at the Council meeting scheduled for 3rd September.

Finances

- The Town Council accounts have been signed off by the external auditor without comment. The formal notification will take place in September at a Full Town Council meeting.
- Dependent upon the level of general reserve at the end of the current financial year consideration should be given to reducing the pension deficit as part of the 3 yearly review that the actuary will undertake later this year, as it is likely to have a significant impact on year on year costs.
- We are likely to incur significant unbudgeted expenditure in this FY as a result of the recent election and potentially a second due to the current casual vacancy (£2k - £6k)
- There has been significant spend in the first 4 months of the financial year. In part because we pay a number of items that cover a full year at the start of the year.
- The RFO will be watching spending very closely in the next few weeks and months as we begin to move into budget season.
- The Town Council will need to consider carefully the relationship with the Community Hall that it is the Sole Trustee of. The current position of holding off recharging of service costs looks like creating a loss of income to the Council of between £10K and £20k. It is acknowledged that there is a training event being held on 30th September for councillors and the Community Hall management committee that will likely provide some solutions that will benefit the Charity without detriment to the Town Council.

The Grove

- Play park funding of circa £25k available to extend facilities.
- Application submitted to acquire match funding (circa £35K) to extend facilities in to the wooded area to create nature trails. We still await the outcome.
- Part of the eligibility criteria is to have ownership of the land. Shropshire Council has been asked to transfer the land in question to Bridgnorth Town Council (previously Shropshire Council have been loathed to pass on land in piecemeal fashion). The request has received support from Shropshire Councillor Christian Lea.
- Consultation with local residents will be required should match funding be realised.

Castle Grounds

- We have received comments regarding the lack of toilets (other than disabled) in Castle Grounds (mostly for use by young children). The Council might wish to consider budgeting next year for a 'portaloo' in the summer holidays.
- The costs of securing Castle Grounds each night are not inconsequential. The Council might wish to reconsider the closing and opening regime e.g. agree not to close the pedestrian gates.

General Grounds Maintenance

- We continue to receive regular requests to tend to grass verges, hedges, drains, pathways, trees that do not fall within the Council's bailiwick. The withdrawal/ reduction by Shropshire Council from many of its general grounds maintenance activities are having a direct impact on the residents of the Town. We are on occasion tending to areas when we are able on an opportunity basis. However, we are not sufficiently manned to undertake our own work and everyone else's.

Personnel Committee

- The recently formed personnel committee have met a number of times and it will take some time before they might be reasonably expected to have a firm handle on all matters. For the time being they are looking to concentrate on high level policies and procedures and the general shape and cost of the work force.

0161/1920 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

Agenda Item 12 - Severn Park Security. Mr McLean of Riverside spoke regarding anti-social behaviour (generally on the form of some car drivers in the late evening and into the night on Severn Park). He asked that the Council take steps to having the gates to Severn Park locked every evening at 8:30pm.

0162/1920 **MINUTES**

- i) Members noted receipt of the draft minutes of the Meeting of Bridgnorth Town Council held on Tuesday 23rd July 2019.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Meeting of Bridgnorth Town Council held on Tuesday 23rd July 2019 be signed by the Chairman as a true record.

0163/1920 **MAYOR AND DEPUTY MAYOR'S DIARY**

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

Town Mayor

19/8 Opening of the Bridgnorth & District Arts Society's Exhibition

Deputy Mayor

24/7 Teddy Bears' Picnic

0164/1920 **MEMBERS QUESTION TIME**

Nil

0165/1920 **COMMITTEE MINUTES**

- i) Planning Committee – minutes of the meeting held on 5th August 2019

RESOLVED: to receive the minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 5th August 2019 and noted the resolutions contained therein.

0166/1920 **FINANCE**

- i) Accounts Paid – July 2019

Members noted receipt of a list of retrospective payments for approval.

RESOLVED: that the accounts amounting to £61,663.89 be retrospectively approved for payment.

- ii) Budget Report

Members noted the Budget Summary report, including Earmarked Reserves.

iii) Balance Sheet

Members noted the balance sheet as at 31st July 2019 (£978,772)

iv) Town Council Bank Reconciliation Statements

Members noted the bank reconciliation statements as at 31st July 2019.

v) Receipts and Payments Summary

Members noted the in-year receipts and payments summary as at 31st July 2019.

vi) Accounts for Payment

Members noted receipt of a list of payments for approval.

RESOLVED: that the accounts amounting to £17,112.84 be approved for payment.

0167/1920 **TREES**

Members considered a motion from Councillor Mrs C Whittle to promote the benefit of planting trees and shrubs including its positive impact in mitigating the challenges of increased carbon emissions and climate change.

RESOLVED: that Bridgnorth Town Council signs up to the Woodland Trust's Tree Charter and its 10 Principles.

Those principles being:

- Sustain landscapes rich in wildlife
- Plant for the Future
- Celebrate the power of trees to inspire
- Grow forests of opportunity and innovation
- Protect irreplaceable trees and woods
- Plan greener local landscapes
- Recover health, hope and wellbeing with the help of trees
- Make trees accessible to all
- Combat the threats to our habitats
- Strengthen our landscapes with trees.

In addition members asked that the Council take the opportunity to apply for the free 'Woodland Packs' being made available through the Woodland Trust.

0168/1920 **CASUAL VACANCY**

- i) Members were advised that at least 10 signatures had been submitted requesting an election take place to fill the current casual vacancy on the Town Council (Morfe Ward). A timetable of proceedings had been issued with the closing date for nominations being 4.00 pm on Friday 30th August 2019. Should there be more than one candidate the proposed date for a poll would be Thursday 26th September. Full details will be promulgated on Town Council notice boards and the Council website. Members were advised that should potential candidates wish to obtain nomination forms then these are available from either the Town Clerk at Bridgnorth Town Council or the Returning Officer at Shirehall.

0169/1920 **SEVERN PARK – SECURITY**

RESOLVED: that the Town Clerk be delegated authority to arrange for the locking of gate of Severn Park to reduce the opportunities for vehicle related anti-social behaviour.

In making the decision members were clear that the desired aim was likely to be that the main entrance gate to Severn Park be closed from 8:30 pm each and every evening. It was noted that there were differing opening and closing times for Severn Park depending on the season and that some of the signage would need to be renewed once a firm opening and closing regime had been confirmed.

0170/1920 **BRIDGNORTH (LOW TOWN) COMMUNITY HALL**

- i) Accounts for Payment

Members noted a list of accounts for Payment.

RESOLVED: that the accounts amounting to £1,126.48 be approved for payment.

- ii) Members noted that a training day will take place on Monday 30th September for all Councillors and appropriate staff regarding running a charity.

0171/1920 **COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW**

Members noted that a consultation is taking place and received a brief on a proposed Town Council response.

RESOLVED: to delegate to the Town Clerk the task of submitting the Town Council response to the Community Governance Review consultation on the boundary of Bridgnorth (before 6th September), subject to all 3 members of the working group being content and that it is very much in line with the working group report considered at the Town Council meeting held on Tuesday 20th August.

0172/1920 **ECONOMIC GROWTH STRATEGY**

Members note that a response to the Shropshire Council led consultation has been submitted.

0173/1920 **LAVINGTON GARDENS**

Members noted a report (previously circulated) regarding the condition of the rock face and that it appears to be relatively safe with no action being required at the moment other than to continue monitoring

0174/1920 **BRIDGNORTH & DISTRICT TWINNING ASSOCIATION**

Members noted a report from Councillor Mrs H Howell.

0175/1920 **BRIDGNORTH CLUB FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**

The Clerk advised members that following receipt of a letter sent by the Town Clerk requesting information regarding the finances of the subject charity he had received a rather prompt response from one of the Trustees. The telephone conversation was informative and open. Subsequently, the Clerk has asked that some written response be provided that can be put before the Town Council.

0176/1920 **FOOTWAY LIGHTING – LED UPGRADE**

Members noted an update on the LED Upgrade Project, summarised below:

- A contract has been agreed and signed with the contractor (on slightly better terms than originally quoted) and is available for councillors to view.
- The upgrade project is scheduled to happen over 2 phases Sep /Oct 2019 install first 120 or so lanterns and Feb / Mar 2020 (final) phase 2 to install remaining lanterns (circa 120). Old style lanterns that fail and require replacing between phase 1 and phase 2 will be upgrade as the faults occur.

- The cost of the project is anticipated to be no more than £40,000, against a budget of £41,500.
- The change to LED may result in some comment; the light thrown out will be of a different colour than the current SON / SOX technology. The contract has built into it the provision for a small number of lamps to have shields that can be installed where, for instance, the LED light glares into a bedroom and might be considered a nuisance.
- The project will contribute significantly to reducing the Town Council's energy use.

0177/1920 **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.

0178/1920 **TOWN COUNCIL DEBTORS**

Members considered a report from the RFO.

RESOLVED:

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

(Note: the recommendations specifically included the write-off of a debt £148)

0179/1920 **STAFFING MATTERS**

- i) Temporary staff contract extension

RESOLVED: to extend the temporary contract of employment for the current supernumerary DLF staff until 31st January 2020.

- ii) Members were advised that correspondence had been received that should be discussed at the Personnel Committee meeting on 22nd August 2019.

0180/1920 **DISPUTED INVOICES**

Councillor C Walden left the meeting at this point.

RESOLVED:

Members noted correspondence from the representative of JLB Electrical.

Members considered a motion to revisit a previous decision made by the Council on the matter at the Adjourned Annual Meeting on 21st May 2019.

The motion was not carried.

Members noted that the previous offer remains open.