

BRIDGNORTH TOWN COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Meeting of Bridgnorth Town Council held remotely via Zoom
Video-Conferencing on Tuesday 20th October 2020 at 7.15pm**

Present:

Councillors:

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

In Attendance:

L Jakeman, Town Clerk
A Kendrick, PA to the Town Clerk

(Note: A reporter from the Shropshire Star was in attendance to observe the meeting)

0111/2021 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Nil

0112/2021 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr Sawbridge – Item 19 Land at Bandon Lane
Cllr Davies – Item 19 Land at Bandon Lane

0113/2021 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

Question from Mr R Richards

Does the Council think it wise or fair to increase the annual precept at a time of great economic uncertainty, when many people are facing decline in their income, unemployment or the likelihood of unemployment?

Town Mayor's Response

The level of the precept is being discussed as part of the annual budgeting process which has just begun. Balancing the need to provide services against the need to limit spending is an annual event that needs thoughtful consideration. There are likely to be differing views amongst members of the Council, some will have strong views, some will not have formed a view and some will retain an open mind and reach their own conclusion through full engagement with our budgeting process. World and local events might prompt some challenges and it is not appropriate for me to surmise, what the Council might think is wise and fair ahead of the matter being discussed later in this meeting.

0114/2021 **MINUTES**

- i) Members noted receipt of the draft minutes of the Meeting of Bridgnorth Town Council held on Tuesday 22nd September 2020.

RESOLVED: to approve the minutes of the Meeting of Bridgnorth Town Council held on Tuesday 22nd September 2020.

0115/2021 **MAYOR'S DIARY**

Members noted the Mayor's diary since the last meeting:

Mayor's Diary

September

23th - Meeting with John Proctor/ The Bridge Bar

24th - Visit to Bridgnorth Hospital new developing sensory garden as President of the Hospital League of Friends

26th - Opened The Perfume Lab, Whitburn street

Opened the new premises for Bridgnorth Boxing Academy

October

2nd - Covid 19 information stand with Shropshire council
Meeting with Cllr Christian Lea

4th - Meeting to thank Bridgnorth Endowed school pupils litter picking at Crown Meadow

- 5th - Meeting
- 6th - Attended Bridgnorth Library in celebration of libraries week (Oct 5th -10th)
Meeting with Royal British Legion and relevant parties re Remembrance
- 8th - Meeting with head of Shropshire CAB Jackie Jeffery
Site visit with Treetown
- 11th - Litter pick with The Rotary Club
- 12th - Meeting with come2lowtown committee
Pre agenda meeting LJ/AK
- 13th - Meeting with RFO
Visit with Town Clerk to The Bridge Bar
- 14th - Raffle draw Tesco's High Street in aid of Cancer charities
- 15th - Meeting with Bridgnorth Poppy makers / site visit to Castle Grounds

0116/2021 **MEMBERS QUESTION TIME**

NIL

0117/2021 **FINANCE**

- i) Accounts Paid – September 2020

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

RESOLVED: that the accounts amounting to £58,763.89 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 2020 (£878,148) comprising:

General Fund	£551,087
Ear Marked Reserves	£142,070
Useable Capital Receipts	£184,991

- v) Town Council Bank Reconciliation Statements

Members noted the bank reconciliation statements as at 30th September 2020.

- vi) Receipts and Payments Summary

Members noted the in-year receipts and payments summary as at 30th September 2020.

- vii) Accounts for Payment

Members noted receipt of a list of payments for approval.

RESOLVED: that the accounts amounting to £55,739.86 be approved for payment.

(Clerk's Note: Cllrs Dyson and Fox to sign cheques on behalf of Town Council)

- viii) Accounting and Audit

Members noted that Councillors Davies and Dyson, on Friday 25 September 2020, verified/signed the bank statements for August 2020, authorised payroll for September 2020 and signed those cheques approved by Council at the meeting held on 22 September 2020.

- xi) Direct Debit Payment

RESOLVED: to delegate to the Financial Administrator the task of setting up a direct debit with Veolia for the monthly waste disposal charges.

0118/2021 BUDGET PREPARATION 2021/22

Members noted a report from the RFO and received a second draft budget for 2021/2022 and noted the increases and decreases in each budget heading.

A further report from the RFO was tabled at the meeting regarding the discussions at a budget workshop held on Thursday 15th October 2020 extract below:

"A workshop was held, via zoom, between Councillors, the Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer. A presentation was aired and Councillors were presented with 3 draft budgets that took into account areas that were included in the presentation. The draft budgets were purely for information and were examples of how the budget could look in certain scenarios and were no way

intended to be taken as a possible budget; they were designed to provoke debate.

Broad discussions took place on many subjects which included a wide range of competing demands and priorities. No decisions were made at the workshop; it was a chance for Officers and Councillors to digest the latest financial situation. In addition to the usual business of council, consideration of 2 new services had been received from individual Councillors.

The Town Council had been approached to take over the running of the Youth Club on Innage Lane from Shropshire Council. The Town Council had previously, under minute number 0271/1920, 'resolved to delegate to the Town Clerk to respond to the current Shropshire Youth Consultation on behalf of the Town Council' that the Town Council was not minded to make any budgetary provision for supporting services that had beneficiaries beyond the Town boundary and where the funding for them (through taxation) is considered to be more appropriate through a wider tax collecting body.

The money that has previously been earmarked, by Shropshire Council, for this function is now being re-directed into providing mobile youth workers following a consultation that was carried out by Children's Services. The current centre runs 2 sessions a week that see on average 29 children in attendance over both sessions.

For some time, the Citizens Advice Bureau has not had a physical presence in town. Council were consulted on whether they would consider helping the CAB to hold sessions and if so in what capacity. Possibilities included part funding an outreach worker or providing a facility that might be suitable.

The first draft budget was a real cost in year budget; continue with all current services – minus the Carnival for 2021 - plus £15,000 to continue with the youth club and £10,000 for the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB). This gave an increase on the precept of 18.94% - an annual increase of £26.14 on a band D equivalent with no decrease in the predicted General Fund (£211,024).

The second draft gave a 0% increase in the precept while continuing with all current services – minus the Carnival for 2021 - plus £15,000 for the youth centre and £10,000 for CAB. This reduced the predicted General Fund to £91,350, a potential loss of £119,674.

The third draft gave a 0% increase in the precept with the predicted General Fund at £172,250, a loss of £38,774. To achieve this there was no provision for the youth centre, CAB, Carnival, Castle Hall or public toilets; Castle Hall and public toilets were used as an example only of services that could be cut to achieve no increase in council tax.

Councillors were invited to provide further comment to help the shaping of the next draft budget. The budget process is necessarily lengthy, detailed and is subject to much modification”.

A general discussion followed in which all councillors were afforded the opportunity to express their views on levels of service and levels of taxation. While there was some general consensus, there were also varying priorities and opposing views. While the meeting decided nothing, the views expressed will enable the officers of the Council to prepare a number of revised draft budgets for consideration over the coming weeks.

0119/2021 **QUARTERLY BUDGET MONITORING**

Members noted the quarterly budget monitoring report.

0120/2021 **ANNUAL GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN – YEAR END 31 MARCH 2020**

Members noted:

- i) The review of Bridgnorth Town Council’s Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR)
- ii) The satisfactory review by the External Auditor (PKF Littlejohn LLP) of Bridgnorth Town Council’s Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR) without additional comment
- iii) A copy of the Notice of Conclusion of Audit (and details the rights of inspection).

0121/2021 **REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY**

Members noted the Act of Remembrance Schedule (found below) and **RESOLVED: to approve expenditure from the events budget for filming and live streaming in relation to the Act of Remembrance.**

*ACT OF REMEMBRANCE - BRIDGNORTH WAR MEMORIAL
Sunday 8th November 2020*

Civic Party:

- *Deputy Lieutenant, Hugh Trevor-Jones*
- *Town Mayor, Councillor Kirstie Hurst-Knight*
- *Chairman of the Bridgnorth Branch of the Royal British Legion, Mr John Whitty*
- *RAF Cosford , Name TBC*
- *Rector St Mary’s Church, Reverend Prebendary Simon Cawdell.*

10:50 - Civic Party meet and make their way to the War Memorial

10:55 - Welcome address - Rev Cawdell

10:58 - Exhortation

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:

Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.

At the going down of the sun and in the morning

We will remember them.

10:59 - Last Post

11:00 - 2 Minutes silence observed

11:02 - Reveille

11:03 - Kohima Epitaph

When you go home, tell them of us and say,

For your tomorrow, we gave our today.

11:04 – Wreath Laying

11:05 – Civic Party proceed to St Mary’s Church

0122/2021 **CHRISTMAS LIGHTING UP NIGHT**

Members noted a report from the PA to the Town Clerk which provided an update on arrangements for Christmas Lighting Up Night.

RESOLVED: to hold the Christmas Lighting Up Night on Thursday 19th November 2020 and for the event to be held virtually, with the option for spectators to join anywhere along the lighting route.

0123/2021 **TOWN HALL MARKET – ADDITIONAL DAY**

RESOLVED: to reject the idea of an additional market day (under the Town Hall).

0124/2021 **ARTS TRAIL**

- i) Members noted the minutes of the Arts Trail Working Group held on 21st September 2020 and 12th October 2020.
- ii) **RESOLVED: to acknowledge the progress of the Art Trail Working Group in re-vamping the trail to encourage visitors to the town during Covid and note the latest addition to the trail this October.**

0125/2021 **SHROPSHIRE MARKET TOWNS FUND**

Members noted an update from the Town Clerk and receipt of the draft interim report that provided an overview of how the £20k grant funding was being allocated to support the High Street economic activity. The Town Clerk provided a verbal update regarding additional investments since the report was circulated with the agenda. (Note: the report will be publically available once submitted). Town Council minute 0074/2021 dated 18th August refers.

0126/2021 **OUTDOORS AND PROPERTIES MANAGER’S REPORT**

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

In particular, members noted the suggestion to have formal policy on tree works and were keen to consider a draft at the earliest opportunity; they felt that a policy could provide clarity to the public on what tree works the Town Council would generally undertake.

0127/2021 **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.

0128/2021 **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.

0129/2021 **LAND AT BANDON LANE**

(Cllrs G Davies and K Sawbridge left the meeting)

Members noted the contents of the Town Council's Solicitors correspondence.