

BRIDGNORTH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of Bridgnorth Town Council held remotely via Zoom
Video-Conferencing on Tuesday 17th November 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
K Sawbridge
C Walden
C Whittle
R Whittle

In Attendance:

L Jakeman, Town Clerk

(Note: A reporter from the Shropshire Star was in attendance to observe the meeting as were 19 members of the public)

0135/2021 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

S Stevens

0136/2021 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Nil

Written Questions submitted prior to publication of the agenda

Questions from Mr R Gill

1. Imagine that an old friend who used to live in Bridgnorth and hasn't been back for several years comes to visit. One morning while you are at work you go for a walk around the town and when you return from work they show you some photos and say "I don't remember it being like this". What do you say?
2. There are several notices around the town which say that Bridgnorth was a finalist in Britain in Bloom in 2014. There are also banners "Welcoming" people back which say we were "Great British High Street 2016". What projects are underway today that might result in us having something current to boast about?

Town Mayor's Responses:

1. I am not sure that I can speak for all here or in the Town, people will have different views and different memories. I am confident that most people would want to see all parts of the Town at their best; different areas of the Town are the responsibility of different organisations and individuals. The Town Council looks to maintain its own areas to a reasonable standard within budgetary constraints. In areas where it has no direct responsibility then the Town Council will look to encourage those that do have the responsibility to do so.
2. With regard to what projects might result in us having something current to boast about I would draw your attention to Woodland Nature Trail project on the Grove by Lodge Lane that is currently out for tender and advertised on the main page of the Town Council website

Questions from Mr R Richards

1. The Arts Trail being a project supposedly independent of the Council, why do its accounts appear in the Council's accounts?
2. Does not the appearance of the Arts Trail accounts in the Council's accounts imply that the Council has taken on legal and financial responsibility for the Arts Trail?
3. Did the Council draw the attention of the external auditor to the fact that the Arts Trail was a project independent of the Council, and if not, why not?

4. If it did, should not the external auditor have mentioned it in its report, and should not the external auditor therefore be changed?

Town Mayor's Responses

1. The Arts Trail is a Town Council project and its finances are rightly recorded within the Town Council accounts.

0138/2021 **PUBLIC SESSION**

The Town Council RESOLVED to suspend the meeting to allow members of the public present to comment and items on the agenda

Oral Questions

The following members of the public spoke in support of the proposal to support the Bridgnorth Youth Club for April 2021 to 2022:

Gillian Bailey
Charlotte Round
Arlie Chetter
Sue Maloney
Angela Pritchard
Martha Laybourne
Laura Clarke
Vicky Turner

0139/2021 **Members RESOLVED to resume the meeting**

0140/2021 **CHANGES TO ORDER OF BUSINESS ON THE AGENDA**

Members RESOLVED to bring forward for discussion the item with the proposal to support the Bridgnorth Youth Club for April 2021 to 2022 as the next item.

0141/2021 **PROPOSAL TO SUPPORT BRIDGNORTH YOUTH CLUB FOR APRIL 2021 – 2022**

Members RESOLVED to

- (1) Re-establish the Bridgnorth Youth Partnership to bring together all providers of youth activities in the town, as a platform for co-operation, alignments and accessing funding.

- (2) Work with Shropshire Council to prepare an “Invitation to Quote” tender specification before 31 December 2020 that seeks provision of open access youth clubs in Bridgnorth from April 2021 – April 2022 to replace the closed service.
- (3) Approach the former Bridgnorth Boys’ Club in its old and new iterations (Ambition), to ask its representatives to:
 - a. Participate in the Youth Partnership and
 - b. Consider providing financial support for the provision sought
 - c. Consider future requests for funding for the group, where appropriate

(Clerk’s Notes:

- An amendment was proposed by Cllr Dyson that as part of the Town Council’s budgeting process that up to £7,500 of match funding be provisioned for the Service; the motion failed.
- No financial commitment has been made or identified
- Cllr Buckley requested that the votes cast be recorded in the minutes:
For – Cllrs; Baines, Barlow, Buckley, Cooper, Dyson, Fox and Howell:
Against - Cllrs Marshall, Sawbridge, Walden, C Whittle and R Whittle:
Abstentions - Cllrs: Davies and Hurst-Knight)

0142/2021 **MINUTES**

- i) Members noted receipt of the draft minutes of the Meeting of Bridgnorth Town Council held on Tuesday 20th October 2020.

RESOLVED: to approve the minutes of the Meeting of Bridgnorth Town Council held on Tuesday 20th October 2020.

- ii) Members noted receipt of the draft minutes of a meeting of the Personnel Committee held on 29th October 2020.

RESOLVED: to receive the minutes of the Personnel Committee meeting held on 29th October.

0143/2021 **MAYOR'S DIARY**

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

Mayor's Diary

- 22/10 Sporting Bridgnorth meeting
- 26/10 Budget meeting with RFO
- 27/10 High street review meeting with Shropshire Council
Zoom meeting with Phillip Dunne MP
LPR Steering Group AGM meeting
- 28/10 Bridgnorth Boxing Academy hardship funding meeting
- 30/10 Prize draw at The Cake Room for New Cross Hospital Heart & Lungs Centre
- 2/11 Virtual meeting with Councillor Christian Lea
- 3/11 Zoom meeting with RBL and other parties re Remembrance arrangements
Poppy display at Talbot Court with Deputy Mayor
- 4/11 Remembrance practice
- 6/11 Poppy displays Castle Grounds (1 hour)
- 7/11 Poppy displays Castle Grounds (1 hour)
- 8/11 Remembrance Sunday
- 10/11 Agenda meeting
- 11/11 Remembrance Day at Castle Grounds with Deputy Mayor and Rev Simon Cawdell

Deputy Mayor's Diary

- W/C 12/10 – Local Government Educational briefings at Oldbury Wells School
- 28/10 Meeting with Philip Dunne 28th Oct- with Kirstie
- 3/11 Poppies at Talbot Court 3rd Nov - with Kirstie
- 11/11 2 minutes silence at statue in Castle Gardens with Kirstie

0144/2021 **MEMBERS QUESTION TIME**

Nil

0145/2021 **FINANCE**

- i) Accounts Paid – October 2020

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

RESOLVED: that the accounts amounting to £68,771.31 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 31st October 2020 (£819,714) comprising:

General Fund	£498,201
Ear Marked Reserves	£136,522
Useable Capital Receipts	£184,991

v) Town Council Bank Reconciliation Statements

Members noted the bank reconciliation statements as at 31st October 2020.

vi) Receipts and Payments Summary

Members noted the in-year receipts and payments summary as at 31st October 2020.

vii) Accounts for Payment

Members noted receipt of a list of payments for approval.

RESOLVED: that the accounts amounting to £13,682.63 be approved for payment.

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

viii) Accounting and Audit

Members noted that Councillors C Dyson & R Fox, on Friday 23 October 2020, verified/signed the bank statements for September 2020, authorised payroll for October 2020 and signed those cheques approved by Council at the meeting held on 20 October 2020.

ix) VAT Partial Exemption 2019/2020

Members noted that the calculations for the VAT Partial Exemption position for 2019/2020 have been completed by DCK Accounting Solutions. The VAT recovered on the exempt activities for the year was £5,343.83 which has not exceeded the de-minimis limit of £7,500.

x) Corporate Card

Members noted that a new corporate card has been applied for in the name of Lee Jakeman as Town Clerk of Bridgnorth Town Council. The existing card has been placed on hold.

0146/2021 **FEES AND CHARGES 2021/2022**

Members noted that the majority of fees are proposed to remain at the same level as 2020/2021 with the following potential exceptions: administrative costs are to be increased by 2.75% and market fees are to increase by 15%. Any formal confirmation of the setting of fees will need to be done at the same time as the budget and precept as they are interdependent.

Members comments included:

- Consideration should be given to increasing the all-day car parking fee for Severn Park.
- Reconsideration of the fee structure for Castle Hall in general.
- Gaining a better understanding of the fee structure for works undertaken under contract from Shropshire Council.
- That some level of increase for all fees be made broadly and at least in line with any percentage increase in the Council Tax.
- Rounding some fees to more practicable rates was required (noting that the draft fees had in many instances been calculated with a 2.75% increase).

0147/2021 **BUDGET PREPARATION 2021/22**

i) **Members RESOLVED to defer the matter**

“Indicate which draft budget, if any, is the most desirable to Council” and hold a separate extraordinary meeting to discuss the budget for Financial Year 2021/22.

(Clerk’s note an Extra-ordinary meeting will be held on Wednesday 25th November 2020 to consider this item)

ii) **With Regard to Ear Marked Reserves (EMR) RESOLVED: to authorise the following additions to EMR’s from the General Reserve:**

£2,000 - Lavington Gardens – 325
£2,000 - DLF training – 325
£2,000 - Property repairs – 325
£2,000 - Elections – 331

0148/2021 **TWINNING**

- i) Members noted the minutes from the Bridgnorth Twinning Association meeting held on 8th October 2020.
- ii) **RESOLVED: to appoint Councillor Karen Sawbridge as a Town Council representative to the Bridgnorth Twinning Association.**

0149/2021 **LISTLEY STREET PUBLIC CONVENIENCES**

RESOLVED: To as soon as practicably possible make the use of the public toilets in Listley Street free of charge.

(Clerk's Note: Members asked that it be conducted for a trial period and a review to take place within 6 months).

0150/2021 **CASTLE HALL**

Members noted a report from the Town Clerk and correspondence from a local business requesting discounted / preferential rates for room hire.

RESOLVED: That the Town Council will retain its published fees (and not offer an ad-hoc discount) for Castle Hall.

0151/2021 **COMBINED SEWAGE OVERFLOWS**

Members noted a report and a proposal from Cllr S Barlow relating to Combined Sewage Overflows

RESOLVED: that Bridgnorth Town Council supports the aims of the Sewage (Inland Waters) Bill which will likely have a positive effect in improving the quality of water in the River Severn.

0152/2021 **UNADOPTED AND NON TOWN COUNCIL LAND – GROUNDS MAINTENANCE**

RESOLVED:

- i) **To confirm that tree management of the Bylet Island is the responsibility of the Bowling Club and that obligation is laid out in the lease and reflected in the level of rent charged.**

- ii) That the area referred to as Severnside (for which the Town Council has no responsibility) be cleared of vegetation by using funds in the Tree Management budget (and that the Town Council acknowledges that this is undertaken 'at risk' to the budget and the general reserve), and subject to Shropshire Council contributing in some meaningful fashion (e.g. a proportionate financial or other resource contribution).

(Clerk's Note: It was noted by members that following clearance, the Council will need to consider how and by whom the land might be maintained thereafter).

0153/2021 **TREE MAINTENANCE POLICY**

Members considered a report and a draft Tree Maintenance Policy

RESOLVED: to form a working group comprising Councillors Marshall, Buckley, Davies and R Whittle to consider the first draft of the Tree Maintenance Policy and produce a final draft for future consideration by the Town Council. (Town Clerk to issue terms of reference.

0154/2021 **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.

0155/2021 **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 (including taking action through the small claims court).

0156/2021 **CHRISTMAS LIGHTING CONTRACT**

RESOLVED: that the Town Council accept the offer of a one year extension to the current Christmas lighting contract (Lightwire Electrical Ltd) at the current fixed price.

0157/2021 **PERSONNEL COMMITTEE**

Members noted the report and considered the 2 recommendations.

RESOLVED: to approve the 2 recommendations contained within the Personnel Committee confidential report.

0158/2021 **IT CONTRACT**

RESOLVED: to form a working group comprising (Councillors Dyson, Hurst-Knight and Sawbridge) to: discuss options with a small number of contractors who submit quotes: to make a recommendation to Full Town Council; and consider any budget (overspend) implications. (Town Clerk to issue terms of reference).