

BRIDGNORTH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Bridgnorth Town Council held in the Castle Hall on Tuesday 18th May 2021 at 7.15pm

Present:

Councillors:

Hurst-Knight (for election of Mayor)
Barlow
Baines (MBE)
Buckley
Buffey
Chetter
Connolly
D Cooper
N Cooper
Neal
Rochelle
Round
Sawbridge
Wellings

In Attendance:

L Jakeman, Town Clerk
R Williams, RFO & Deputy Town Clerk
A Kendrick, Democratic Services Officer

(Note: 2 members of the public)

0001/2122 TO ELECT THE TOWN MAYOR FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2021/22

It was proposed by Councillor Baines and seconded by Councillor D Cooper That Councillor Barlow be elected as Town Mayor 2021/2022.

RESOLVED: that Councillor Barlow be elected as Town Mayor for the Municipal Year 2021/2022.

The outgoing Town Mayor congratulated Councillor Barlow on her appointment and gave a farewell speech.

“It has been a huge honour and privilege to serve on this Town Council for the past 4 years as a ward councillor, Deputy Mayor and finally for the past 12 months as Mayor and Chairman of the Council.

It has been a strange and trying year for all; adapting to a global pandemic and dealing with all the issues that Covid brought. My thoughts are with all that lost loved ones to this.

At this point, I'd like to acknowledge the NHS staff and the way in which our Hospital stepped up from the Minor Injuries Unit to an A&E Department, to the Medical Practice, Dr Swallow and the team for an excellent vaccination rollout. To the agencies, teams and emergency services. Public health, Highways to West Mercia Police and our committed Community Support Officers. We've all worked together with positive results.

To the businesses that continued to trade, to the ones that closed and reopened, to all that played their part in the past 12 months. Thank you for your efforts.

To my chosen charities, the hard work and adaptability of Tracy and the Crew at Innage Lane Day Care Centre, to Liz Bird at the Food Bank/Bridgnorth Community Trust, we raised a few funds and have future planned events to continue this collectively.

As President of the Hospital League of Friends, what an amazing bunch! Raising vital equipment for our hospital; Paula, Sue and the team I look forward to continue working with you all.

I signed up for this role and took it seriously and did it to the very best of my ability with enthusiasm, compassion and a real sense of professionalism in my duties.

However, I didn't sign up for the onslaught of social media abuse that was personally directed at me and only heightened near election time.

So to the outgoing councillors we all volunteered our time to make a difference and working with you all has been rewarding and I personally thank you for your contributions.

To the new councillors, good luck, I wish you all the very best in taking the “new look” council forward.

Council is a place of debate, we don't always agree, nor should we. It's in the debate that we represent this town and the decisions made are for the greater good.

Ron, thank you for your guidance when I was your Deputy, and your continued support and encouragement when I was Mayor.

To the Town Clerk, Council Officers, DLF, you have all worked hard during these difficult times. You've adjusted and coped under testing circumstances and continued to provide excellent service.

So I'm delighted to pass the Chain of Office to Sarah, I am sure she will be an excellent leader. She has been a hardworking Councillor and a supporting Deputy, so I have no doubt in the Barlow style she'll wholeheartedly throw herself into the role and the town will benefit from her tenure as Mayor.

Finally, to the residents of Bridgnorth, I am grateful for the opportunity to still serve, but as a newly elected Shropshire County Councillor.

To my friends whom your support was always valued.

To my family who understood what this really meant to me.

And to Carl, my Consort, my sons Ewan and Alec and my lovely Mum and Dad. I hope I did you proud.

Thank you."

The newly appointed Town Mayor signed the declaration of acceptance office register which was duly witnessed by the Town Clerk following which she gave an acceptance speech.

"Good evening ladies & gentleman, fellow councillors, Town Clerk.

Firstly, can a say a huge thanks to Cllr Kirstie Hurst-Knight, the outgoing mayor. Cllr Hurst-Knight has been a very active, positive & able mayor in an extremely difficult year. Kirstie has included me in everything she has done and has been a fantastic role model for me to follow.

I would like to thank all previous councillors and a huge welcome to those of you who have joined us for the first time this evening. I can't forget are fantastic workforce who do a great job and keeps things running so smoothly.

I joined the council 6 years ago after being encouraged by previous town clerk, Anne Wilson and hoping to follow in my Dad (Charles Billingham) footsteps. My Dad was involved greatly in the community, spending time on the Round Table, Rotary club and being county fundraiser for Macmillan for many years.

This brings me to the charities that I would like to support; Firstly Macmillan (in memory of my Dad),

Then Seaful, a charity that encourages mental wellbeing and promotion of looking after our waterways & oceans.

I would also like to support a couple of smaller charities such as Bridgnorth Bathing Project.

For those of you who don't know me, I grew up and went to school in Bridgnorth. I have worked at Oldbury Wells school for about 18 years having previously worked at Bridgnorth Endowed school. My elderly mother lives in the town and I have a teenage daughter as well as 2 grown up children. I am interested in supporting all members of the community.

I can't promise to change the world, but I will always be approachable and will try my best to represent the views of all residents and members of the community, with fairness and integrity.

Finally, a big thank you to my family and friends who have always been supportive and encouraging especially during times when being a councillor can often be a thankless task."

(Clerk' Note: The outgoing Mayor was presented with a past Mayor's Medal and past Mayor's Consort medal).

0002/2122 **TO ELECT THE DEPUTY TOWN MAYOR FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2021/22**

It was proposed by Councillor Rochelle and seconded by Councillor Buckley that Councillor Sawbridge be elected as Deputy Town Mayor 2021/2022.

RESOLVED: that Councillor Sawbridge be elected as Deputy Town Mayor 2021/2022.

0003/2122 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Nil

0004/2122 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Nil

0005/2122 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

Mr E Marshall asked 4 questions –

Q1. Agenda item 13 Standing Orders, and Appendix TC/02/2121

Quite simply the Town Clerk is proposing that this meeting agrees to remove the whole of Standing Order 3 (y) as he implies it is already covered by Standing Orders (e) to (k). I fundamentally disagree. It would be much better for residents that opposite is done; remove Standing Orders 3 (e) to (k) and retain Standing Order 3 (y) with appropriate changes to i and ii.

Do you seriously want a member of the public from anywhere to make representations etc at any Bridgnorth Town Council meeting? Under 3 (y) residents have always had the right to ask questions about any aspect of council business but if you approve the Town Clerk's recommendations, this Council has deliberately curtailed the rights of Bridgnorth residents.

I respectfully point out that not one Member of this Council has received a single vote from any elector. I have always thought that the primary concern of Bridgnorth Town Councillors should be the interests of Bridgnorth residents; after all they are the primary source of income for this Council. It would be unfortunate if one of the very first decisions of this new Council is to deliberately curtail the rights of Bridgnorth residents to ask public questions. Not a friendly act.

Personally I would like to see a Member request a recorded vote on this particular matter so that residents can be fully informed of how councillors voted.

Q2. Agenda Item 15 External Bodies

The Sir Robert Lee Charity was established around the year 1635 specifically for the benefit of the poor of the Lower Town of Bridgnorth. Because of work being undertaken to make this Charity much more relevant and effective for the people of Low Town, the working Trustees of this Charity acquired a copy of the latest, current Constitution of the Charity, which is dated 3rd February 1905. It clearly states that the body of Trustees shall, when complete, consist of five competent persons, three of whom shall be appointed by the council of the Borough of Bridgnorth. Persons appointed by the Council may be, but need not be, a member of the appointing body.

The Agenda Item mentions 4 posts –Morfe Ward for the Sir Robert Lee Charity. This was always the case in recent years, but as we now know this to be incorrect, and Members have been informed, I suggest that this meeting appoints only 3 people.

Q3. Agenda Item 12 Working Groups Appendix TC/01/2122

Based on the Agenda Paper TC/01/2122, and on an email sent yesterday to recently retired Town Councillor, the Town Clerk believes that the Bridgnorth

Town Plan Steering Group is a Working Group of the Town Council, set up in July 2019.

At this stage I have no reason to doubt that what the Town Clerk has written is not correct. But if correct, this could raise several serious issues, as the Bridgnorth Town Plan Steering Group has, in my opinion, been acting as an independent group communicating with and making representations to other bodies including Shropshire Council. Several current members of this council have been actively involved in this group as Bridgnorth Town Councillors.

The legal situation needs to be resolved.

Q4. Agenda Item 25 Finance section x Internal Audit Report. Appendix M.

A small point. The Internal Auditor is particularly good at picking up small points. The Town Council could point out that Shropshire County Council ceased to exist on 31st March 2009, and so could not possibly be involved in providing payroll Services.

The Town Clerk responded: The points are noted and members will be able to consider the points made at the appropriate agenda items later in the meeting.

0006/2122 **MINUTES**

- i) Members noted receipt of the draft minutes of the Meeting of Bridgnorth Town Council held on Tuesday 27th April 2021.

RESOLVED: to approve the minutes of the Meeting of Bridgnorth Town Council held on 27th April 2021.

0007/2122 **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- i) Planning Applications

The Town Clerk informed that meeting that it had been noted that a recent planning application for the development of the Smithfield site (currently a car park) had appeared to have attracted much public comment. The planning application has been circulated to all members of the Council and the Council will be considering how it might wish to respond in the coming weeks. The meeting was further informed that an extension to the standard response time deadline had been granted by the Local Planning Authority. Once the business of this meeting had been transacted (including the confirmation of the terms of reference for and the appointment of members to the Town Council's Planning Committee), the Town Council (and members) could formally begin consideration of the matter.

Car Parking - Councillor Buckley advised that (in her capacity as a Shropshire Councillor) that tomorrow (19th May) Shropshire Council would be providing some communications regarding public consultation on development and temporary parking arrangements.

0008/2122 **MEMBERS QUESTION TIME**

Nil

0009/2122 **SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS**

RESOLVED: to approve the schedule of meetings for the municipal year 2021/2022 as follows:

Full Town Council ¹	Planning Committee ²	Personnel Committee ³	Annual Town Meeting
18 May 2021 1 June 15 June 6 July 20 July 17 August 7 September 21 September 19 October 2 November 16 November 14 December 18 January 2022 1 February 15 February 15 March 19 April 17 May 2021	7 June 5 July 2 August 6 September 4 October 1 November 6 December 10 January 2022 7 February 7 March 4 April	10 June 9 September	TBC

ANNUAL REVIEWS

0010/2122 **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

- i) **RESOLVED to approve the Terms of Reference for the Planning Committee.**
- ii) **RESOLVED: to approve the Terms of Reference for the Personnel Committee.**

0011/2122 **APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO COMMITTEE**

- i) **RESOLVED: to appoint Councillors Connolly, D Cooper, Neal, Sawbridge and Wellings to the Planning Committee.**
- ii) **RESOLVED: to appoint Councillors Buffey, Connolly and N Cooper to the Personnel Committee.**

0012/2122 **WORKING GROUPS**

RESOLVED:

- a. **To approve (unamended) the Terms of Reference for the following 2 working groups.**
 - i. **Arts Trail and appoint Councillors Buckley, Buffey and N Cooper as Town Council representatives.**
 - ii. **Events & Christmas and appoint Councillors Barlow, Connolly, Round and Sawbridge as Town Council representatives.**

subject to them reviewing their own terms of reference and making recommendations (regarding the TORs and membership) to Full Town Council promptly.

- b. **To appoint Members to the following Working Groups**
 - i. **Community Governance – Councillors Buckley, N Cooper and Sawbridge.**
 - ii. **Local Plan Review – Councillors Buckley, D Cooper, Rochelle, Sawbridge.**

(Clerk’s note: Members noted that the existing TORs where somewhat dated and would need modification and that they would need reviewing by the working groups and subsequently the approval of any revised TOR by the Full Council).
- c. **To appoint the following councillors for each of the following working groups who should liaise with the current membership (of those working groups) to re-evaluate the terms of reference and membership and in turn make recommendations to the Full Town Council before any further action is undertaken.**
 - i. **Tree Planting – Councillors Chetter, Neal and Rochelle.**
 - ii. **Climate Change – Councillors Chetter and Neal**

iii. **Bridgnorth (Town) Plan Steering Group – Councillors D Cooper, Neal, Rochelle and Sawbridge.**

d. **That Councillor D Cooper be appointed as Chairman of the Bridgnorth (Town) Plan Steering Group.**

0013/2122 **STANDING ORDERS**

RESOLVED: to adopt Standing Orders without amendment.

0014/2122 **FINANCIAL REGULATIONS**

RESOLVED: to adopt Financial Regulations without amendment.

0015/2122 **EXTERNAL BODIES**

RESOLVED: that the following Councillors be appointed to external bodies:

St Leonard’s, Weaver and Bluecoat Trust (2 posts – 3 year term)

Councillors Barlow and Chetter

Bridgnorth & Shifnal Area Committee of Local Councils (2 posts – 1 year term)

Councillors Connolly and Wellings

Sir Robert Lee’s Charity (3 posts)

Councillors Chetter, Rochelle, and Mr E Marshall

Bridgnorth Parish Charity (1 post – 3 year term)

Councillor Baines

Bridgnorth & District Twinning Association (1 post – 3 year term)

Councillor Sawbridge

Bridgnorth Community Hall Management Committee (6 posts – reviewed annually)

Councillors Baines, Buffey, N Cooper, Wellings.

RESOLVED to suspend Standing Orders to allow public participation.

Mr Marshall and Mr Whittle confirmed that, having been asked, they were willing to continue serving on the Management Committee of the Bridgnorth Community Hall.

RESOLVED to also appoint Mr E Marshall and Mr R Whittle to the Bridgnorth Community Hall Management Committee.

RESOLVED to reinstate Standing Orders.

0016/2122 **REVIEW OF INVENTORY OF LAND AND ASSETS**

Members noted that a review of the asset register had been undertaken as part of the end of year accounting process.

0017/2122 **INSURANCE ARRANGEMENTS**

Members noted that the Town Council has a 3 year contract with WPS Insurance which expires in July 2023 and **RESOLVED: to delegate the task of maintaining appropriate insurance cover to the Town Clerk**

0018/2122 **SUBSCRIPTIONS**

- i) Members noted that the Council is currently a member (by subscription) of the following organisations (agreed as part of the budget process):
- Shropshire Association of Local Councils
 - National Association of British Market Authorities
 - Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management.
- ii) **RESOLVED: to delegate the decision of continued membership (of the above) for next financial year as part of the standard budgeting process.**

0019/2122 **TOWN COUNCIL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

RESOLVED: to approve adoption of the complaints procedure, as amended at the meeting.

Clerk's Note – second bullet point to add the word 'believes' between 'Town Council' and 'to', so that it reads "Acknowledge whether or not the Town Council believes to have made a mistake".

0020/2122 **REVIEWING THE COUNCIL'S PROCEDURES FOR HANDLING REQUESTS UNDER THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 AND THE DATA PROTECTION REGULATIONS**

- i) Freedom of Information
- RESOLVED: to approve adoption, subject to the removal of 'fees other', from the last table of the model publication scheme.**
- ii) Data protection
- RESOLVED: to delegate to the Personnel Committee the task of reviewing the current Data Protection Policies.**

0021/2122 **POLICY FOR DEALING WITH THE PRESS/MEDIA**

Members considered a draft policy prepared by the Town Clerk.

RESOLVED: to defer the matter and in the meantime, create a Working Group, consisting of Councillors Barlow, Round and Wellings to review the policy and produce a draft document for consideration by the Full Town Council in due course.

0022/2122 **EMPLOYMENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

RESOLVED: to delegate to the Personnel Committee to conduct a review of the employee handbook.

0023/2122 **EXPENDITURE UNDER THE GENERAL POWER OF COMPETENCE**

Members noted that there had been no expenditure under The General Power of Competence in the previous financial year.

0024/2122 **GENERAL POWER OF COMPETENCE**

Members considered a report from the Town Clerk and

RESOLVED: to re-adopt the General Power of Competence.

0025/2122 **FINANCE**

i) Accounts Paid – April 2021

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

RESOLVED: that the accounts amounting to £57,950.09 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 April 2021 (£1,187,000) comprising:

General Fund	£840,430
Ear Marked Reserves	£173,937
Useable Capital Receipts	£172,633

v) Town Council Bank Reconciliation Statements

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

vi) Receipts and Payments Summary

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

vii) Accounts for Payment

i) Members noted receipt of a list of payments for approval.

RESOLVED: that the accounts amounting to £10,566.25 be approved for payment.

ii) **RESOLVED: to authorise Councillors S Barlow and D Cooper to sign the cheques (on Friday 21 May 2021)**

viii) Accounting and Audit

Members noted that former Councillors S Stevens and C Whittle, on Friday 30 April 2021, verified/signed the bank statements for March 2021 and signed those cheques approved by Council at the meeting held on 27 April 2021. Former Councillors S Stevens and R Whittle authorised payroll for April 2021.

ix) Internal Auditor

Members noted that the Town Council has a 3 year contract with JDH Business Services Ltd to carry out the function of internal audit for the financial years 2020/21, 2021/2022 and 2022/2023.

- x) Internal Audit Report
- i) **RESOLVED: to receive and accept the final Internal Audit Report for 2020/2021 whilst noting the comments from the Town Clerk and RFO.**
- ii) **RESOLVED: to retrospectively approve the following movements to Earmarked Reserves following the Internal Auditors comments at points 1 & 2 of the report:**

EMR 346 - Committed Funds 2020/2021:

Legal costs	£500
College House repairs	£210
Fire equipment (various areas)	£1,854
Scaffolding (Clock Tower)	£1,150
Water Bowser	£3,153
CCTV Feasibility Study	£297

EMR 345 – Mayoral Allowance Unspent:

Mayoral Allowance	£470.00
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- xi) Risk Management

RESOLVED: to adopt the Risk Management Strategy (without amendment).

- xii) Financial Reserves

RESOLVED: to adopt (without amendment) the Financial Reserves Policy.

- xiii) Regular Payments and Standing Orders

RESOLVED: to approve the list of regular payments, direct debits and standing orders.

(Clerk's Note: It was noted that the rent payable to Severn Park of £11,953 was listed as being payable annually when in fact it is biannually; the RFO would make the necessary change to the list)

0026/2122 **TOWN COUNCIL VACANCIES**

RESOLVED: to approve the co-option timetable:

Monday 24th May – Co-option timetable published on the Town Council Website and notice boards and vacancies advertised.

Friday 18th June – Last day for candidates to register an expression of interest (in writing) in being co-opted onto Bridgnorth Town Council.

Tuesday 6th July – Town Council meeting to consider candidates (candidates will be invited to speak for up to 3 minutes before members vote).

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