

**BRIDGNORTH TOWN COUNCIL**

**Minutes of the Meeting of Bridgnorth Town Council held in the Castle Hall on  
Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> July 2021 at 7.15pm**

Present:

Councillors:

Sawbridge – Deputy Town Mayor (Chair)

Aked

Baines MBE

Buffey

Chetter

Colley

Connolly

D Cooper

N Cooper

Neal

Rochelle

Round

Seabright

Wellings

In Attendance:

L Jakeman, Town Clerk

R Williams, Deputy Town Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer

**0095/2122 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Councillor Barlow (Town Mayor) - personal commitment

Councillor Buckley - personal commitment

**0096/2122 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Nil

- i) Mr E Marshall had submitted a written question in advance of the Agenda:

*Dear Madam Mayor*

*A question about recording of Council Meetings.*

*As far as I am aware, Bridgnorth Town Council is still a Council that is proud to proclaim that it is an Open and Transparent Council.*

*Therefore, could Bridgnorth Town Council give serious consideration to the re-introduction of audio recording all Town Council meetings, including all Committee Meetings, and furthermore to broadcasting these meetings. Broadcasting meetings would permit organisations and individuals to make their own recordings without recourse to contacting the Town Council and the likelihood of incurring a fee. The actual financial cost to the Council would be the proverbial 'peanuts', and likewise the staff time involved would be negligible.*

*It only takes one councillor to request that this item is put on the agenda of a Council Meeting, but it would be much better if Bridgnorth electors and residents became aware that all 16 current councillors had requested and supported this action.*

*Background Information*

*For the last couple of years or so, the Minutes of Council meetings have taken the form of a formal brief business report, only giving details of the motions adopted, i.e., decisions taken. There is no information about the debate and whether any decision is contentious or just 'nodded through', and normally no record of how individual Councillors voted, unless a member requested a recorded vote.*

*These Minutes are permanent historical records that can be accessed and researched for years, decades and generations to come. In previous years, the Minutes were much more detailed and an almost verbatim record of what was said, and by whom.*

*From 2009 to around 2015, the Town Council did audio record its meetings, but this was stopped for reasons which are no longer applicable. For a few months around 2017/2018 some of the full Council Meetings were videoed and broadcast live on Facebook by members of the Labour Party, and the Annual Meeting of the Council held in May 2021 was videoed and broadcast live by the Town Council itself.*

*Personally, I would prefer all Council Meetings to be recorded by video.*

*Finally, most if not all current councillors would know that many of the Council Meetings held by Zoom earlier this year were well attended by members of the public, at least one by around 30 to 40 people. All those members of the public attending these Zoom Meetings did not have to pay to hear and view the proceedings.*

**A Response was provided by the Town Clerk:**

The Town Council has not recently discussed the format of meetings or the production of the minutes.

The Town Council meetings and their minutes are undertaken and published in full compliance and spirit of the regulations. Guidance on the requirements is provided by the National Association of Local Councils (with paragraphs 67 thru'78 being the most relevant).

With regard to filming/ recording, the cost of live streaming the Annual Council meeting was just over £500.

The Chairman verbally added that given the foregoing, it was not financially viable to record every Council Meeting.

**Mr Marshall made a supplementary statement which included:**

- His dissatisfaction with the legalistic response.
- Comments relating to 2 items of particular interest on the agenda which the wider public might be interested in (Flooding and Local Policing).
- That the minutes were of interest/ use for historical purposes.
- A suggestion that councillors do something about it.

0098/2122 **MINUTES**

- i) Members noted receipt of the draft minutes of the Meeting of Bridgnorth Town Council held on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> July 2021.

Members agreed that the previous minutes under minute 0082/2122 (Co-Option) should record that Mr B Jones was proposed as a candidate by Councillor D Cooper for co-option in Castle Ward, albeit not seconded.

**RESOLVED: to approve the minutes** (subject to the inclusion of the above) **of the Meeting of Bridgnorth Town Council held on 6<sup>th</sup> July 2021.**

0099/2122 **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

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

- 13/6 - Visit to Pam's Pools. Signed pledge to #preventpointlessplastic
- 22/6 - Meeting at Morville to support Acton Arms action group
- 23/6 - Tasley Gateway update meeting
- 26/6 - Open new business 'Yours Truly Events'  
Walk about town, speaking to traders, visitors and residents
- 27/6 - Open Morville/5 churches fete
- 28/6 - Agenda prep meeting with Deputy Mayor and Town Clerk
- 30/6 - Judging creative writing competition for Castlefields School
- 2/7 - Interview with BBC Radio Shropshire about floral provision in the town
- 2/7 - Visit The Bridge Youth Club
- 7/7 - Open new business 'Delightful Desserts' with Deputy Mayor
- 7/7 - Visit to Bridgnorth cubs. Took litter pickers, high viz jackets in conjunction with Shropshire Wildlife Trust.
- 8/7 - High Sheriff of Shropshire visit (with Deputy Mayor)
- 11/7 - Judge Bridgnorth in Bloom
- 13/7 - Visit St Leonards primary school.

ii) **Welcome Back Fund** - The Deputy Mayor advised members that on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> July she, the Mayor and Deputy Mayor had attended an on line briefing from Shropshire Council officers on the topic. Bridgnorth had been allocated around £20k by Shropshire Council, who in turn had been allocated £288k (of European Regional Development Fund money) and the Town Council is being asked to identify where the money might best be spent in areas primarily around improving the street scene.

Members suggested that it would be helpful for a shared document to be created so that all councillors might submit suggestions (and see each other's comments) for possible spends of the funds available, so that the Mayor in Consultation with the Clerk might prepare a submission by the anticipated closing date (13<sup>th</sup> August 2021)

0100/2122 **LOCAL POLICING**

The Deputy Mayor introduced PC Lightfoot and PCSO Dunn-Brown of the local policing team.

Following introductions, the police team provided a general overview of key points/aims regarding local policing including: Visibility, Responding to Communities, Crime Prevention, Support to the Vulnerable and Relationships (with the Town Council) and Partnerships. The new initiative of a 'contract' between the Town Council was explained in general terms and it seeks to have

the Town Council identify what it sees as the 3 top priorities for the local policing team through the submission of a standard form signed off by the Mayor and /or Town Clerk. The priorities would be reviewed at regular intervals.

Following the brief, members had a brief opportunity to ask questions or seek clarity on points raised including:

Cllr Round – Is there a plan of action with regard to exploitation?

Cllr Aked – Visibility of uniformed officers is extremely important for public confidence.

Cllr Buffey – what about wider public consultation?

Cllr Seabright – can we have some data that might inform us of priorities?

Members were of the view that the matter of identifying the Council (3) Priorities should be undertaken at the August Town Council meeting.

## 0101/2122 **FLOODING**

The Deputy Mayor welcomed a Mr James Turner of the Environmental Agency (EA) who briefed members on the Initial Assessment (IA) document produced by the EA in response to recent flooding events of the River Severn at Bridgnorth.

The IA identified a number of potential measures to reduce the impact of flooding generally speaking, on a cost/benefit analysis basis, the conclusions (depending upon the 5 areas identified at risk within Bridgnorth) appeared to simply either 'Do Nothing' or else 'Do Minimum' (An option where the Operating Authority maintains existing assets maintenance and flood warning services. For many places, this means patch & repair works of existing defences).

Following the brief, members had a brief opportunity to ask questions or seek clarity on points raised including:

Cllr Wellings – Local residents have some suggestions as to how to improve the situation and particularly relating to maintenance works. Can/have they been consulted?

Cllr Sawbridge – In assessing the benefit of possible solutions and determining that they were not cost effective it appeared that no consideration had been given to the negative impact on tourism for a protracted period of time (not just the duration of the flooding, because of the contamination and damage caused to the Severn Park area) and the financial impact to that part of the Bridgnorth economy.

Cllr Neal – Further to Cllr Wellings points could it be possible to set up some form of local flood action group?

(Mr Turner suggested that he would be content to help facilitate the setting up of such a group)

0102/2122 **MEMBERS QUESTION TIME**

Nil

0103/2122 **FINANCE**

i) Accounts Paid – June 2021

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

**RESOLVED: that the accounts amounting to £55,319.88 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 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021 (£1,092,953) comprising:

General Fund	£751,545
Ear Marked Reserves	£168,775
Useable Capital Receipts	£172,633

v) Town Council Bank Reconciliation Statements

Members noted the bank reconciliation statements as at 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021.

vi) Receipts and Payments Summary

Members noted the in-year receipts and payments summary as at 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021.

vii) Accounts for Payment

Members noted receipt of a list of payments for approval.

- i) **RESOLVED: that the accounts amounting to £25,681.11 be approved for payment.**
- ii) **RESOLVED: to authorise Councillors A Buffey and L Rochelle to sign the cheques (on Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2021)**

viii) Accounting and Audit

Members noted that Councillors Baines and Buckley, on Friday 18<sup>th</sup> June 2021, verified/signed the bank statements for May 2021 and signed those cheques approved by Council at the meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> June 2021. Councillors Baines and Buckley authorised payroll for June 2021.

0104/2122 **QUARTERLY BUDGET MONITORING**

Members duly noted the quarterly budget monitoring report. Members asked that future budget monitoring reports include income sources & not merely expenditure items.

0105/2122 **UTILITY CHARGES FOR PUBLIC TOILETS**

Members considered a report and **RESOLVED:**

- i) **To delegate to the Financial Administrator the task of setting up direct debits with Everflow Water and British Gas for utility charges.**
- ii) **Vire an amount of £5,000 from cost code 4160/285 (public convenience contract) with £3,000 to be apportioned to 4115/285 (water rates) and £2,000 to 4120/285 (heat & light).**

0106/2122 **SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS**

Members reviewed the schedule of meetings and **RESOLVED: to approve the draft schedule tabled at the meeting.**

(Clerk's Note: The draft schedule tabled at the meeting differed from that which was circulated with the agenda in that included a date of 27<sup>th</sup> July for the newly formed Events & Christmas Committee)

0107/2122 **COMMITTEES/WORKING GROUPS**

- i) **Memberships** - Following on from the recent round of co-options to the Town Council, members re-considered membership of committees and working groups (WG).

**RESOLVED: to approve membership to Town Council Committees and Working Groups as follows:**

**Planning Committee;**

**Cllrs: Colley, D Cooper, Neal, Sawbridge, Wellings**

**Personnel Committee:**

**Cllrs: Buffey, Connolly, N Cooper, Seabright and Wellings**

**Events & Christmas Committee:**

**Cllrs: Aked, Barlow, Colley, Connolly, Seabright and Wellings**

**Arts Trail WG**

**Cllrs: Buckley, Buffey and N Cooper**

**Community Governance WG**

**Cllrs: Buckley, N Cooper, Sawbridge**

**Local Plan Review**

**Cllrs: Buckley, Colley, D Cooper, Rochelle, Sawbridge**

**Tree Planting (later in the meeting renamed Bridgnorth Green Spaces WG)**

**Cllrs: Baines, Chetter, Neal, Rochelle**

**Bridgnorth Town Plan Steering Group**

**Cllrs Aked, D Cooper, Neal, Sawbridge and Seabright**

**Climate Change WG**

**Cllrs: Buffey, Chetter and Neal**

**Media Policy WG**

**Cllrs: Barlow, Round and Wellings**

**Grants Policy WG**

**Cllrs: Aked, Neal and Seabright**

- ii) **Personnel Committee Terms of Reference**

**RESOLVED: to approve the draft Terms of Reference circulated with the agenda.**



iii) Tree Planting Scheme Working Groups

Members considered a report and

a. **RESOLVED to:**

- **To support and approve the Tree Town Plan for Crown Meadow with some amendments:**
- **Reduction of number of trees in open space, namely 3 trees beside Skate park**
- **Removal of trees in hedge line beside Tennis club boundary in line with comments by tennis club and Grounds Maintenance lead.**
- **Exchange 'spiky' thorn varieties proposed with non-thorn varieties in hedge line beside tennis club boundary to prevent puncturing of footballs or other potential injury.**

**Tree Town Plan:**

- **120m new hedge, tennis club boundary, hornbeam or similar native non-thorn variety.**
- **x6 standard Oak trees, 15m+ spacing along bank beside top pitch (not interfering with pitch at full maturity)**
- **x2 standard 'other' trees, Towards Victoria Rd entrance.**
- **x5 medium sized trees, whitebeam or similar, around children's play area.**
- **Community planting weekend to be organised by the charity 'Possible' during planting season (Nov-March) by arrangement.**

b. **RESOLVED to:**

- i) **To rename the Tree Planting Scheme Working Group the 'Bridgnorth Green Spaces Working Group'**

**AND**

- ii) **To approve** (subject to membership being revised to comprise up to 10 members with at least 3 and up to 6 members being councillors and minimum of 4 meetings per year) **the Terms of Reference for the Bridgnorth Green Spaces Working Group distributed with the agenda.**

0108/2122 **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)*

0109/2122 **TOWN COUNCIL DEBTORS**

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

0110/2122 **PERSONNEL COMMITTEE MATTERS**

The Chair of the Personnel Committee provided members with a verbal update of some of the matters discussed at the Personnel Committee the previous evening. The minutes and any formal recommendations will be presented to the Town Council at its meeting in August.

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