

BRIDGNORTH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of Bridgnorth Town Council held in the Annexe, College House on Tuesday 18th October 2022 at 7.15pm.

Present: K Sawbridge BEM (Mayor)
C Aked
C Baines MBE
S Barlow
J Buckley
A Chetter
R Connolly
D Cooper
N Cooper
R Ireland
E Marshall
L Neal
L Rochelle
R Seabright
I Wellings

In Attendance: Mrs R Williams, Interim Town Clerk
Miss A Plimmer, Business Administrator

4 Members of the public
1 Shropshire Councillor
2 Members of the Local Policing Team
1 Member of the press

0193/2223 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Nil

0194/2223 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Nil

It was proposed by Councillor K Sawbridge, seconded by Councillor R Ireland and unanimously

RESOLVED: to move agenda item 4 to before agenda item 3.

0195/2223 **POLICING CHARTER – SAFER NEIGHBOURHOOD TEAM**

Members received a verbal briefing from PCSO Stephen Dunn-Brown and PCSO Helen Oakley regarding performance against the previous three charter priorities.

Councillors J Buckley, A Chetter and L Neal arrived.

It was proposed by Councillor K Sawbridge, seconded by Councillor R Ireland, and unanimously

RESOLVED: that the 3 policing priorities should be:

1. To reduce illegal drug activity, particularly in residential areas.

2. To reduce speeding cars and antisocial driving in and around the Town Centre.
3. To tackle antisocial behaviour with an emphasis on the evenings in and around the Town Centre.

0196/2223

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Mr R Richards (Answered by Councillor I Wellings)

1. Would it not be better, from the point of view of public engagement and consultation, to mention the actual nature of the project in Agenda Item 13 every time the subject comes up before the Council?

A: The working title for this project is Proposed Town Hall Improvements and Enhancements.

2. What is the estimated cost of the whole project?

A: Costings have not been formulated at this time. The Quantity Surveyor appointed will prepare feasibility costings based on the Architects feasibility plans, Structural Engineers requirements based on the Architects details and essential maintenance reports prepared as part of the Quinquennial Report.

3. From the point of view of ensuring best value for money, would it not be best for the Council to obtain estimates for the feasibility study of the project from as wide an area as possible rather than from just locally?

A: Fee quotations will be sought from both local and further afield professional practices with proven experience in this type of project. However, there are 2 architectural practices based in Bridgnorth who do have experience of this type of project.

4. Does the Council need the permission of English Heritage to go ahead with this project?

A: Of course dialogue will be required with not only English Heritage, but also the Historic Environment Team Shropshire Council, the Conservation Officer Shropshire Council, Bridgnorth Civic Society, Bridgnorth and District Historical Society. A presentation of proposals will be made available to the general public for comment and opinions. (Conversations have already taken place with the Conservation Officer)

5. Has the Council considered the project's long-lasting aesthetic effect on one of the most important historic buildings of Bridgnorth?

A: The long-lasting aesthetic effect on probably Bridgnorth's most iconic building has been at the forefront of all discussions and ideas undertaken and put forward by the Working Group. The group are well aware of this buildings importance to the people of and visitors to Bridgnorth. The group have majored on items that will be of benefit to all, breathe new life into an under used major focal point of the town centre but being mindful at all times to preserve the buildings historic and chequered past.

Supplementary Question: Who will be funding the project?

A: This has not been decided yet, however there are a number of grants available that will be explored.

Mr D Gough

Mr David Gough read a statement regarding Bridgnorth Town Carnival.

Councillor K Sawbridge stated that this would be discussed under agenda item 5.2.3.

0197/2223

SHROPSHIRE COUNCILLOR

Members received a verbal report from Shropshire Councillor Kirstie Hurst-Knight. She welcomed Councillor Rachel Connolly into her new role as a Shropshire Councillor. The report detailed the work taking place by Shropshire Council in Bridgnorth. This included;

- An initiative to introduce a 20mph speed limit around all schools in the County.
- Car parking strategy review
- Working with local Police to reduce speeding and antisocial behaviour around Bandon Island and surrounding roads, as well as the Kidderminster and Stourbridge roads. New larger road signs are to be installed.
- Working is continuing on improving the condition of the roads around town including Bridge Street, Mill street and Morfe Road.
- Shropshire Council have been advised that the Bridgnorth Flood Action Group are still operational by Councillor Nellins.

Councillor S Barlow arrived.

0198/2223

MINUTES

1. It was proposed by Councillor K Sawbridge, seconded by Councillor A Chetter and majority

RESOLVED: to approve the minutes of the Bridgnorth Town Council meeting held on Tuesday 27th September 2022.

Councillor L Rochelle abstained.

2. Members noted the minutes of the meeting of the Events committee on Monday 5th September 2022.

- 2.1. It was proposed by Councillor K Sawbridge, seconded by Councillor S Barlow, and majority

RESOLVED: to reinstate the Teddy Bears Picnic for 2023.

Councillor E Marshall abstained.

- 2.2. Members had been asked to approve a Slipway Permit Scheme for commercial canoeing companies to use Seven Park.

It was proposed by Councillor A Chetter, seconded by Councillor K Sawbridge, and majority

RESOLVED: to approve the Slipway Permit Scheme and set an annual fee of £500 to commence in April 2023. Appropriate correspondence to be sent to the commercial companies who currently use the slipway.

Councillor R Ireland abstained.

- 2.3. It was proposed by Councillor K Sawbridge seconded by Councillor C Baines and unanimously

RESOLVED: to suspend standing orders to allow members of the public to speak.

Mr D Gough and Mr J Gittins of the Carnival Committee expressed that the Bridgnorth Town Carnival this year was a success, however they felt that there had been issues with communication between the Carnival Committee and Bridgnorth Town Council. Members were reminded that the committee is made up of volunteers and that the aim is to provide the town with an annual carnival. To achieve this aim some contingency funding should be in place to account for cancellations/bad weather. Both Mr D Gough and Mr J Gittins expressed their concerns over the current proposal from the Events Committee.

It was proposed by Councillor K Sawbridge seconded by Councillor C Baines and unanimously

RESOLVED: to reinstate standing orders.

It was proposed by Councillor N Cooper seconded by Councillor K Sawbridge and majority

RESOLVED: for a discussion to take place between the Proper Officer and the Carnival Committee about what the appropriate level of reserves should be to enable the 2023 Carnival to go ahead before requesting any claw back of Grant or charging for additional costs incurred by the Council in 2022.

Councillor E Marshall requested a recorded vote, the results of which were;

For: Councillors J Buckley, A Chetter, D Cooper, N Cooper, R Ireland, L Neal, L Rochelle, K Sawbridge

Abstained: Councillors C Aked, C Baines, S Barlow, R Connolly, I Wellings

Against: Councillor E Marshall

3. Members noted the minutes of the meeting of the Planning committee on Tuesday 4th October 2022. Councillor D Cooper asked if any member was willing to join the Planning Committee, but unfortunately no one came forward.

Councillor R Seabright arrived.

4. Members noted the minutes of the meeting of the Workforce committee on Thursday 6th October 2022.

0199/2223 **MAYOR AND DEPUTY MAYORS DIARY – SEPTEMBER 2022**

Members noted the Mayor and Deputy Mayor's Diaries for September 2022.

0200/2223 **MEMBERS QUESTION TIME**

Councillor R Ireland (Answered by the Interim Town Clerk)

Members noted the response given to Councillor R Ireland's public question in the Town Council meeting on Tuesday 27th September 2022. Members received the following further question from Councillor R Ireland and accompanying answer.

1. Whilst I accept the accuracy of your reply and the logic that technically none of the concerns raised need to be addressed, I feel we have not acted as openly as we should have done. Can we please be assured that in future we will give reasons for our decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands?

A: Yes, and we will continue to follow our agreed procedures and regulations.

Councillor E Marshall (Answered by the Interim Town Clerk)

Members received the following question from Councillor E Marshall.

1. About two or three days after the event took place, I became aware that an Accession Proclamation of King Charles III was announced publicly by the Deputy Town Mayor at the bandstand in Castle Gardens at some time in the evening of Sunday, 11th September 2022.

I now know that many other Members of Bridgnorth Town Council were also unaware of the impending announcement, that some have expressed disquiet and that some would have attended if they had been told. However, it appears that some other Members had been informed.

We all appreciate that during this period Bridgnorth Town Council were in the unfortunate situation of having staff vacancies and staff being on holiday. Although the public and press may not know, all Members do know that it is extremely easy to send an email to all councillors via one email address. Why was this not done?

Could we have a full comprehensive statement about what happened on that Sunday when the Accession Proclamation was read out, and an explanation of why all Members were not informed?"

A: Throughout the process, following the passing of her Majesty, our London Bridge protocol was followed. Provisions for the Proclamation were not included in the protocol.

An invitation was received from the High Sheriff of Shropshire for Mayors, or Deputies in the absence of the Mayor, to attend the ceremony in Shrewsbury on Sunday 11th September 2022.

Bridgnorth was not on the instruction list to receive a copy of the Proclamation to read out in the town and neither was it mentioned in our protocol.

The Deputy Mayor attended as the Mayor was away. However, a scroll was formally presented to her during the ceremony, something that was not expected. Following discussions with other Mayors and Civic Dignitaries who were present at the ceremony and given the late notice of this duty, it was felt that the message of the Proclamation needed to get through to the town's folk as a matter of priority. 'Love Bridgnorth' was used as a vehicle to get the message across as the online site has a large number of followers.

Internal procedures have now been amended to ensure that this situation will not arise in the future.

0201/2223 **RESIGNATION**

Members noted the resignation of Councillor A Buffey and that an election has been called to appoint a new Councillor for the Morfe Ward.

0202/2223 **RESIGNATION FROM COMMITTEE**

It was proposed by Councillor E Marshall, seconded by Councillor C Aked, and unanimously

RESOLVED: to appoint Councillor E Marshall to the Finance Committee following the resignation of Councillor R Seabright from the Committee.

0203/2223 **FINANCE**

1. Accounts Paid – September 2022

It was proposed by Councillor K Sawbridge, seconded by Councillor S Barlow, and unanimously

RESOLVED: that the accounts amounting to £49,070.59 be retrospectively approved for payment.

2. Members noted receipt of Cashbooks 1, 2 & 3.

3. Members noted the budget Summary report including earmarked reserves.

4. Balance Sheet

Members noted the balance sheet as of the 30th September 2022 (£1,011,656) comprising:

General Fund:	£636,584
Earmarked Reserves:	£202,439
Useable Capital Receipts:	£172,633

5. Town Bank Reconciliation Statements

Members noted the bank reconciliation statements as of the 30th September 2022. (Reconciled sum of all bank accounts £810,796.31)

6. Accounts for Payment

Members noted receipt of a list of payments for approval. It was proposed by Councillor K Sawbridge, seconded by Councillor L Neal, and unanimously

6.1. **RESOLVED:** that the accounts amounting to £23,389.98 be approved for payment.

6.2. **RESOLVED:** to authorise Councillors N Cooper and R Connolly to sign the cheques on Friday 21st October 2022.

7. Accounting and Audit

Members noted that Councillors N Cooper and C Aked, on Friday 30th September 2022, verified/signed the bank statements for August 2022 and signed those cheques approved by Council at the meeting held on Tuesday 27th September 2022 and authorised payroll for September 2022.

0204/2223 **BURIAL DEEDS**

Members noted that Councillors will be requested to witness and sign the following deeds, to which the seal had been applied, on Friday 21st October 2022.

- Deed 2152 Oak Grove
- Deed 2151 Oak Grove
- Transfer Deed 1778 Oak Grove

0205/2223 **BRIDGNORTH & DISTRICT TWINNING**

Correspondence had been received from Bridgnorth & District Twinning Association requesting an annual grant of £1,500.

It was proposed by Councillor R Seabright, seconded by Councillor R Connolly, and majority

RESOLVED: to ask the Twinning Association to provide additional information before a decision is made. To include, a fundraising strategy, demonstration of how they are engaging with all demographics/promoting inclusivity, a clearer understanding of the organisations structure and key performance indicators.

Councillor L Rochelle abstained.

0206/2223 **TOWN HALL WORKING GROUP**

Members considered the agenda submission from Councillor I Wellings and viewed initial plans and proposals for the Town Hall improvements. It was proposed by Councillor K Sawbridge, seconded by Councillor C Baines, and unanimously

RESOLVED: to suspend standing orders to allow members of the public to speak.

Mr R Richards expressed his concerns about the project and the potential costs involved.

It was proposed by Councillor N Cooper, seconded by Councillor C Baines, and unanimously

RESOLVED: to reinstate standing orders.

It was proposed by Councillor R Ireland, seconded by Councillor A Chetter, and unanimously

RESOLVED: to agree in principle that expenditure of up to £15,000 will be moved from Earmarked reserves to fund the initial feasibility stage. However, quotes will be obtained and bought back to Town Council before committing any expenditure.

Councillor N cooper confirmed that should the capital improvement works proceed, then there would be a transfer from Earmarked reserves to Capital reserves.

0207/2223 **SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS**

Members reviewed the schedule of meetings. It was proposed by Councillor A Chetter, seconded by Councillor S Barlow, and majority

RESOLVED: to keep the current schedule of meetings but look to review again at the Annual Town Meeting on Tuesday 16th May 2023, so as to spread out more evenly the subcommittee meetings.

Councillor D Cooper abstained.

0208/2223 **ANNUAL REVIEW OF CARBON FOOTPRINT**

Members considered a report and reviewed the activities to reduce the carbon footprint of Bridgnorth Town Council. It was proposed by Councillor A Chetter, seconded by Councillor S Barlow, and unanimously

RESOLVED: to look to undertake an energy audit for Town Council activities.

0209/2223 **VAT PARTIAL EXEMPTION 2021/2022**

Members noted that the calculations for the VAT Partial Exemption position for 2021/2022 have been completed by DCK Accounting Solutions Ltd. The VAT recovered on the exempt activities for the year was £7,003.57 which has not exceeded the de-minimis of £7,500.

It was proposed by Councillor K Sawbridge, seconded by Councillor D Cooper, and unanimously

RESOLVED: to suspend standing orders to allow the meeting to exceed past the 2.5hr limit.

0210/2223 **REPAIRS TO BUS SHELTERS**

Members considered a report with regards to repairs to three bus shelters in high town; 1 x High Street and 2 x Old Smithfield. It was proposed by Councillor S Barlow, seconded by Councillor N Cooper, and unanimously

RESOLVED: To agree to the repairs as per the attached quotation and that the expenditure be funded from EMR 328, £7,000 plus VAT.

(Clerks Note: Councillor R Connolly has asked for a list of bus shelters in Bridgnorth to be produced to show those that Bridgnorth Town Council are responsible for and those that Shropshire Council are responsible for.)

0211/2223 **SIGNAGE AT THE CASTLE KEEP, CASTLE GROUNDS**

It was proposed by Councillor C Baines, seconded by Councillor S Barlow, and majority

RESOLVED: to grant permission to Bridgnorth Historical Society to begin the proposed updates to the board at Castle Keep, Castle Grounds for which there would be no cost to the Council. All prototypes are to be brought before Council for approval.

Councillor E Marshall abstained.

0212/2223 **MEETING OF BRIDGNORTH RETAILERS**

Members noted that the next meeting of Bridgnorth Retailers is to be held on Thursday 24th November at 7pm in the Castle Hall.

0213/2223 **SALC AGM**

It was proposed by Councillor R Seabright, seconded by Councillor K Sawbridge, and unanimously

RESOLVED: to nominate Councillors D Cooper and R Connolly as voting representatives to attend the SALC AGM on Friday 11th November 2022 via zoom.

0214/2223 **PUBLIC BODIES**

It was proposed by Councillor K Sawbridge, seconded by Councillor A Chetter, and majority

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.

Councillor J Buckley abstained.

0215/2223

STAFFING MATTERS

Members received a confidential report from the Work Force Committee and noted the contents.

It was proposed by Councillor S Barlow, seconded by Councillor I Wellings and unanimously

RESOLVED: to accept the recommendation contained in item number 6i of the confidential report.

It was proposed by Councillor N Cooper, seconded by Councillor R Connolly, and unanimously

RESOLVED: to accept the recommendation contained in item number 6ii of the confidential report.

Item number 17, the changing of the Committee name, will be considered again at the December Town Council meeting because of the need to comply with the six-month rule.

DRAFT