



BRIDGNORTH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Town meeting held on Wednesday 1st March 2023 at 6.30pm

Present: Councillor Karen Sawbridge (Town Mayor)

40 members of the public

In Attendance:

11 x Town Councillors (D Cooper, I Wellings, R Connolly, E Marshall, K Sawbridge, C Aked, N Cooper, J Buckley, R Ireland, L Neal, R Leraistre, A Chetter)
Town Council Staff x 2: (C Turner and A Plimmer).

1. **Welcome by the Town Mayor, Councillor Karen Sawbridge**

The Town Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained that the meeting was the Annual Town Meeting for the residents of the Parish of Bridgnorth.

2. **Minutes**

The minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 10th May 2022 were accepted as previously circulated.

3. **Town Council Reports**

a) Councillor Karen Sawbridge – Town Mayor

The Town Mayor provided a Mayoral Welcome Speech. Copy of this is available on the Town Council website - (*ATM001 on the website*) this included:

- The National Pledge.
- The last we months bedding down with new Councillors.
- Sole Trustee of the Bridgnorth Community Hall.
- Discussions with Shropshire Council for a £4 million improvements fund for Bridgnorth.
- Delivery of services.
- Streetlighting upgrading.
- Castle Hall for community use.
- New Working Group of Town Councillors – Town Hall accessibility.
- Review of the merits of establishing a Business Improvement District.
- Energy audits across the organisation.
- Events and event planning.
- The retaining wall.

b) Councillor David Cooper – Planning Committee

Provided a verbal update. Copy of the report and update is available on the Town Council website – (*ATM002 on the website*) this included:

- Explained the aim of the planning committee.
- 22 planning applications considered, of which 3 were refused, 4 were withdrawn by the applicant, 7 were amended to address concerns, 3 proceeded after further clarification or with conditions and 5 were approved without clarification or amendment.
- The Westgate proposals were discussed and had been approved recently with work started.
- Development of the Smithfield Car Park, planning application was withdrawn at the start of the year.
- East side of Oldbury Wells, planning application withdrawn following Shropshire Council highways advise that they would not be able to support the proposal.

A member of the public asked regarding the vacant building on Listley Street. It was informed that planning permission had been permitted for conversion to a hotel and that the Planning Committee regularly raised questions regarding the vacant building.

A member of the public asked regarding the car park at the Old Smithfield. It was informed that there had been a planning application but there had been an issue raised with the cricket ground and safety.

A member of the public asked regarding the vacant building on Fox Corner. It was informed that this was owned by Shropshire Council, and they were working with a potential purchaser to bring this building back into use. Shropshire Councillor Buckley informed that this was currently a confidential situation and would be able to update as soon as possible.

A member of the public asked regarding people entering the building.

A member of the public asked the future purpose of the building on Fox Corner. It was informed that this would likely to be on the same basis as previous and the individual requirements would be looked in to on an individual basis.

A member of the public asked regarding the West Gate Building. It was informed that a request for developing the site had been raised and consultation would be completed, and any development would be subject to planning permission.

A member of the public asked regarding the safety on St Johns Street and that something needed to be done regarding the speeding and the use of this street on a Friday night as a racetrack. It was informed that this was a priority for the policing team and the Town Council will continue to raise the issue with both Shropshire Council and the Local Policing Team.

The meeting was informed regarding the Bridgnorth Connectivity monies of £4.5 million by Shropshire Councillor Julia Buckley and the work currently being undertaken.

The meeting was informed regarding the proposed work on the Low Town bridge and the monies allocated for this £1 million. The work would include the temporary closure of the bridge and during this time a trial would be undertaken to reroute traffic on a permanent basis, where can be, via the by-pass.

- c) Councillor Rachel Connolly – Events Committee
Provided a verbal update. Copy of the report and update is available on the Town Council website – (*ATM003 on the website*) this included:
- Grant payment to the Bridgnorth Town Carnival.
 - 4th June 2022 Queen's Platinum Jubilee Tea Party held.
 - 23rd July 2022 part of Birmingham Commonwealth Games Queens Baton Relay.
 - Working with the Royal British Legion of the annual Remembrance Sunday parade and Armistice Day Event.
 - Christmas Lights Switch on for the Town.
 - July 27th 2023 return of the Teddy Bears picnic in Castle Grounds.
 - Italian Car Festival Sunday 10th September 2023 update provided.
- d) Councillor Nicky Cooper – Finance Committee
Provided a verbal update. Copy of the report and update is available on the Town Council website – (*ATM004 on the website*) this included:
- Newly formed Committee, first meeting in July 2022.
 - Purpose of this meeting to look in more detail of the financial resources.
 - Year spent understanding the payments, receipts, risks, and volatility in income.
 - Recommendation for a balanced budget for the council.

4. Guest Speakers

- (a) SYA Youth Club
SYA were invited to the meeting but unfortunately were unable to attend at the last minute.
- (b) Bridgnorth League of Friends
- The Bridgnorth Chairman of the League of Friends provided an update on the volunteering and work completed.
 - Wanted to raise awareness to the membership and promote where can for new members.
 - Raise awareness of existing events.
- (c) Bridgnorth Food Bank
- An update was provided on the work carried out by the Bridgnorth Food Bank
 - On the 4th February 2023 marked 10 years
 - The organisation has 40 volunteers.
 - Open on a Monday between 10.30am tom 12.30pm
 - Work with various support workers
 - Client referrals and supported by an interview to ascertain what support is needed.
 - Provide funding for Citizens Advice each year.
 - 61,000 items distributed in the last 6 months this included food, toiletries, dog & cat food.
 - Requirement for additional storage.

5. Update on the Retaining Wall at Castle Walk

The Mayor made a formal statement. Copy of the statement is available on the Town Council website – (*ATM002 on the website*) this included:

- Background on the Cliff Railway
- Use of the Cliff Railway
- The Town Council working on resolving the critical issue.
- Working with Shropshire Council engineers, specialist structural engineers, legal representative, land surveyor and civil engineers.
- Difficulty with the geography of the area
- Town Council commitment to approve plans once in a position to do so.

6. **Update from Councillor Edward Marshall on the Local Government Boundary Review.**

Provided a verbal update. Copy of the report and update is available on the Town Council website – *(ATM006 on the website)* this included:

- Background on the history of how the 6 local authorities became one.
- History of Lodge Farm Estate.
- Currently in the middle of a review of electoral arrangements in Shropshire Council.
- Possible effects this will have on the representation of Bridgnorth.
- Possibility of adding adjacent rural parishes
- The three times Bridgnorth Town Council have asked for a Community Governance Review.
- Timetable for the Shropshire Council Review.

7. **Agenda Items submitted by residents.**

There were no agenda items submitted prior to the meeting from residents.

The Mayor asked if anyone present had any questions they verbally wished to raise with the Town Council.

- Member of the Public raised a concern regarding the traffic management in the Town.
- Member of the Public raised a question regarding the CCTV in the Town. It was informed that this could form part of the BID currently being investigated. It was informed that the CCTV was not longer viewed by volunteers in live time.
- A number of questions were raised by members of the public regarding the Cliff Railway. It was informed that this project was an extremely complex, with legal documents dating back to 1893 and due to the requirement for legal representative the Town Council were unable to give detailed information or an update at this time. It was informed that the Town Council are working extremely hard behind the scenes to bring this issue to a conclusion.

8. **Any Other Business**

- A member of the public raised the concern regarding the handrail removal at Theatre on the Steps and it was a health and safety concern.
- A member of the public raised the issue that they wanted to see more police around the town.
- A member of the public raised the concern and issue regarding the drug problem in the town.
- A member of the public raised the concern of trees on Pale Meadow.
- A member of the public raised the concern that a 200 year old oak tree had been removed in the Grove.

- A member of the public wanted to thank the Town Council its Councillors and Staff for all their hard work.
- A member of the public wanted to thank the Town Council for its improved publicity and information on social media.

9. Conclusion by the Town Mayor, Councillor Karen Sawbridge

The Town Mayor thanked electors for attending and reminded them that any further questions can be submitted to the Town Council and they are welcome to submit questions and attend Town Council meetings.

Clare Turner - Town Clerk
Bridgnorth Town Council

Meeting closed at 8.35pm

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