

**BRIDGNORTH TOWN COUNCIL****Minutes of the Bridgnorth Town Council Meeting held in the Annexe, College House on
Tuesday 19th December 2023 at 6.45pm.**

Present: R Connolly (Mayor)
I Wellings (Deputy Mayor)
C Aked
S Barlow
A Chetter
D Cooper
N Cooper
T Green
R Ireland
E Marshall
L Neal
L Rochelle
K Sawbridge

In Attendance: Mrs R Williams, Deputy Town Clerk
Mrs R Follette, Property Manager

One member of the public

0171/2324 **WELCOME**

The Mayor issued a welcome to the meeting.

0172/2324 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

It was proposed by Councillor S Barlow, seconded by Councillor K Sawbridge
Unanimously agreed by all Councillors

RESOLVED: to receive the apologies and reasons for absence for the following Councillors:

Councillor C Baines	Unwell
Councillor J Buckley	Unwell
Councillor R Seabright	Unwell

0173/2324 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor R Connolly, Shropshire Councillor	Item 11, Community Governance Review
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0174/2324 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

The following questions were raised by a member of the public:

- 1) Who has the legal responsibility for Castle Walk as the Town Council monitor Lavington Gardens? Is there insurance in place for Lavington Gardens?

The Chair informed the member of the public that Castle Walk was the responsibility of Shropshire Council and that the monitoring of Lavington Gardens applied to the land/area at the bottom of the cliff face adjacent to Underhill Street. This area forms part of the Town Council estate and as such is on the Town Council Asset register and is covered by insurance.



The following public questions had been raised at the Town Council meeting held on Tuesday 21st November 2023 and a response had been provided:

‘Question 1.

Was the decision to undertake immediate repairs to the retaining wall of the Cliff Railway taken by unanimous resolution of the Town Council?

Response 1.

The decision to undertake immediate repairs to the retaining wall at the Cliff Railway was made at the Bridgnorth Town Council meeting held on Tuesday 21st February 2023. This was not a unanimous decision. The resolution was as follows:

0391/2223 RETAINING WALL AT CASTLE WALK

Members received a verbal update on the progress of the Retaining Wall at Castle Walk project.

*Proposed by Councillor N Cooper, Seconded by Councillor Chetter
Abstained by Councillor Ireland*

RESOLVED: *that the Council note and agree the recommendation within the confidential report for Retaining Wall at Castle Walk project.*

Question 2.

How many Councillors voted for the resolution?

Response 2.

There were 11 Councillors in attendance at the Bridgnorth Town Council meeting held on Tuesday 21st February 2023 and voted on this resolution. The Councillors in attendance at the meeting were: Councillor K Sawbridge BEM (Mayor), R Connolly (Deputy Mayor), C Aled, S Barlow, A Chetter, D Cooper, N Cooper, R Ireland, E Marshall, L Rochelle and I Wellings.

Question 3.

Was the decision to proceed with the work without putting it out to tender by unanimous resolution of the Town Council?

Response 3.

This was not a unanimous decision. The resolution was as follows:

0391/2223 RETAINING WALL AT CASTLE WALK

Members received a verbal update on the progress of the Retaining Wall at Castle Walk project.

*Proposed by Councillor N Cooper, Seconded by Councillor Chetter
Abstained by Councillor Ireland*

RESOLVED: *that the Council note and agree the recommendation within the confidential report for Retaining Wall at Castle Walk project.*

The remedial work was deemed to be of an “emergency” nature, the Town Council sought advice from the Shropshire Association of Local Councils (SALC) who provided the procurement advice from the Parkinson Partnership regarding the procurement thresholds and the advice that allows for the appointment of a single building company to do the work



due to the emergency. Going out to tender with several companies involves a considerable amount of extra time and expense. While all the work, up until now, has been carried out by one building company regarding the remaining sections of the wall the Town Council are currently in discussions on how they will move forward. A copy of the information received from the Parkinson Partnership is attached for your information and reference.

Question 4.

How many Councillors voted for the resolution?

Response 4.

There were 11 Councillors in attendance at the Bridgnorth Town Council meeting held on Tuesday 21st February 2023. The Councillors in attendance at the meeting were: Councillor K Sawbridge BEM (Mayor), R Connolly (Deputy Mayor), C Aked, S Barlow, A Chetter, D Cooper, N Cooper, R Ireland, E Marshall, L Rochelle and I Wellings.'

The member of the public, who was present, commented that the Parkinson Partnership, referred to in the answer, states that the Town Councils own Financial Regulations should be followed.

0175/2324

MINUTES

Councillor D Cooper asked for clarification on the resolution on page 1 on the minutes of 21st November 2023 for the Apologies for Absence with regards to 'accept or receive'. The Deputy Town Clerk is to check and amend if necessary.

Councillor E Marshall made a comment with regards to minute number 0164/2324 and stated that he disagreed with the word 'content', with regards to the Terms of Reference for the Bridgnorth Community Hall. Councillor N Cooper informed Councillor Marshall that the discussion had taken place at a recent meeting of the Management Trustees. Councillor Marshall stated that he would check his notes.

It was proposed by Councillor N Cooper, seconded by Councillor S Barlow

There were four abstentions

RESOLVED: to approve the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on Tuesday 21st November 2023.

Councillor D Cooper commented that a correction was needed to minute number 0152/2324 of the Town Council minutes from 7th November 2023: £5.99 should read 5.99%.

It was proposed by Councillor R Connolly, seconded by Councillor C Aked

Abstentions Councillors S Barlow, E Marshall, L Neal and K Sawbridge

RESOLVED: to approve the minutes of the Extraordinary Town Council meeting held on Tuesday 7th November 2023.

Members noted the minutes from the Finance Committee meeting held on Tuesday 31st October 2023.

Members noted the minutes from the Personnel Committee meeting held on Tuesday 14th November 2023.

0176/2324

MAYOR'S AND DEPUTY MAYOR'S DIARY

Members noted the Mayor's and Deputy Mayor's Diary for November 2023.



Mayor's Diary

1.11.23 - Townswomen's Guild 70th anniversary celebration
 2.11.23 - Public Meeting re: retaining wall. Castle Hall
 5.11.23 - Met with Twinning Association and visitors from Thiers and Schrobenhausen.
 7.11.23 - Presented with Gideon Bible from Geoff Bristow and John Woolridge
 11.11.23 - Visited Spartans Soccer School
 11.11.23 - Two minutes silence – Castle Grounds
 12.11.23 - Remembrance Sunday
 13.11.23 - Charity Fundraiser Eurasia Restaurant
 16.11.23 - Public Meeting Castle Hall
 19.11.23 - Bridgnorth Community Choir concert at Birmingham Town Hall
 24.11.23 - Christmas Lights Switch On
 25.11.23 - Attended Gateway Club Christmas Party – Down Inn
 27.11.23 - Visited Bridgnorth Food Bank

Deputy Mayor's Diary

No official appointments to report

0177/2324


MEMBERS QUESTION TIME

The Deputy Town Clerk read out the Members question from 7th November 2023 and subsequent response, informing Members that the sum invoiced so far for financial year 2023/2024 is £48,400 and that the full answer would be incorporated into the minutes for this meeting:

Question

Can we please see a full and detailed breakdown, dates involved, and final sum invoiced for the stand down charges made by the contractor?"

Response



as at 05/12/2023

Contractor	Item	Phase	2022/2023			2023/2024			
			Net	VAT	Total	Net	VAT	Total	
			2022/2023			2023/2024			
Contractor	Item		Net	VAT	Total	Net	VAT	Total	
Garveys Developments Ltd	Stand down Inst no.1	P2	3,200.00	640.00	3,840.00				Delayed Start 1 week - BTC
	Stand down Inst no.2	P2				1,120.00	224.00	1,344.00	Stand Down for Documents - BTC
	Stand down 4 weeks	P2b				12,000.00	2,400.00	14,400.00	Stand Down for Documents
	Stand down	P2b				9,360.00	1,872.00	11,232.00	Stand Down for Documents
	Stand Down 5 Weeks	P2b				15,000.00	3,000.00	18,000.00	Stand Down for Documents
	Stand Down & Restart Checks	P2b				1,920.00	384.00	2,304.00	Stand Down for Documents
									Restart Costs
	Waiting additional invoice (£9k)					9,000.00			Additional Invoice(£9k)
	TOTAL COST		3,200.00	640.00	3,840.00	48,400.00	7,880.00	47,280.00	
									Phase 2 Start 20th April 2023
									P2b End 13th September 2023



Information / Details on Stand Down Charges.		
Stand Down Instruction:	Costs Included	Notes:
Stand down Inst No. 1	Supervision Tradesmen Site - Cabin / Inspection / Checks Scaffolding / Inspection Insurance CDM Fencing / Footpath Closure	Phase 2 only. Delay at start of works. BTC Solicitor instruction to allow for Phase 2 Documentation to be signed by Cliff Railway. 1 week delay.
Stand down Inst No. 2	Supervision Tradesmen Site - Cabin / Inspection / Checks Scaffolding / Inspection Insurance CDM Fencing / Footpath Closure	Phase 2 only. Delay at start of works. BTC Solicitor instruction to allow for Phase 2 Documentation to be signed by Cliff Railway. 1.75 days delay.
Stand down Inst. @ £4,500 per week (FULL stand down)	- Supervision - Tradesmen (on stand-by, back filling other sites but using as a driver / labourer - not billed as full trades includes pension / add-ons / vans, etc) - Site - Cabin / Inspection / Checks - Scaffolding / Inspection - Insurance - CDM - Fencing / Footpath Closure	Phase 2b only 6 weeks - 31/05/2023 to 12/07/2023 (Invoices paid at £3,000.00 additional invoice due for additional £1,500.00 for 6 weeks - £9,000.00) Garvey agreed to invoice reduced amount for this time to assist the Town Council).
Stand down Inst. @ £3,000 per week (PARTIAL stand down - tradesman sent to other jobs)	- Supervision - Site - Cabin / Inspection / Checks - Scaffolding / Inspection - Insurance - CDM - Fencing / Footpath Closure	Phase 2b only 3 weeks - 13/07/2023 to 01/08/2023
Stand down Inst. @ £1,560 per week (SITE CLOSED)	- Site - Cabin / Inspection / Checks - Scaffolding / Inspection - Insurance - Fencing / Footpath Closure	Phase 2b only 6 weeks - 02/08/2023 to 13/09/2023

The following Members questions were received from Councillor R Ireland for this meeting:

Questions

In summary the full delay was just over 16 weeks at a total additional construction cost of £48,400 plus vat. An average charge of appx. £3,000 per week with some being charged at £4,500 for full stand down, £3,000 for partial and £1,560 per week for the site being closed. MQ1 Please confirm these figures are correct?

We were informed that the original number of tradesmen was 2 and that on resumption of the work it was completed in 4 weeks rather than 6 weeks by the addition of one further tradesman. The original cost to the Council of this phase being £104,000 plus the stand down of £48,400 making a total of £152,400.

As phase 2b comprised 9mts of wall this equals appx. £17,000 per running meter or at an appx height of 5mts roughly £3,400 per m2.

MQ2 Please confirm whether these calculations are correct?

The difference between the full and partial standby charge of £1,500 per week (£750 pw per man?) appears to be whether the tradesmen were being used for skilled or unskilled purposes?

MQ3 Please confirm I have understood this correctly?



However, at a recent public meeting a member of the public stated these men were employed as subcontractors, which was confirmed as normal procedure by a member of the Project Team.

MQ4 Please confirm whether the two tradesmen were directly employed or on subcontract?

MQ5. a) Were stand down charges quantified or agreed in this contract or earlier contracts with Garveys? b) If so can we please see a copy of the relevant contract clauses?

MQ6. If not, how were the charges assessed? Presumably Walker Cotter has made some sort of comparative cost assessment to ensure the Council was being charged at a fair and reasonable rate. Please clarify what that process was if the rates had not been previously agreed?

MQ7. If the tradesmen were subcontracted, can we please see evidence of the cost to Garvey of not using them?

In previous correspondence I have queried the way in which the original Engineer's report was commissioned as it was apparently paid for via Garvey, payment ref. 849 dated 16.2.2023. Normally the client selects consultants rather than them being appointed by contractors.

Given the pivotal role our QS plays in ensuring the Council is achieving best value for money can you please supply the following information -

MQ8. What was the selection process for choosing the cost consultant, how many firms were approached and on what criteria were Walker Cotter chosen?

Finally MQ9. Comments about Garvey reducing an invoice by £9,000 are confusing as the same amount is also referred to as waiting for additional invoice. Please clarify?

Councillor R Ireland was informed that answers would be provided in due course.

0178/2324

SHROPSHIRE COUNCILLOR

The Chair informed Members that Shropshire Councillor, K Hurst-Knight, was unable to attend due to ill health but had provided a written report which was read out as follows:

The Mid Term Financial strategy for 24/35 – 28/29 was passed by cabinet to go out for consultation on the budget which will include an increase in council Tax of 4.99% the council faces further new savings to find in the next year of circa £49 million on top of the reduction in spend of £51 million in this year of which over 80% has been delivered. The consultation will be on the Shropshire council website and will be circulated to all Town and Parish Councils and I would urge as many people as possible to respond to the consultation as we are asking where you think the savings should come from. To date residents have not yet seen any difference in the services we provide, however moving forward there may be some hard decisions to be made on the services you see.

www.shropshire.gov.uk/budget24

The annual council tax base was agreed at Cabinet for the council and Parishes to set the precepts. Across the county we have seen an uplift in properties of 0.92% slightly down on previous years over 1% partly due to the delay in the local plan by inspectors and the lack of allocated land to build on



The council tax base also included an increase in Council Tax of a further 100% on second homes. This is not full time lets which the council see as vital to our tourism economy.

News in brief

1. Since October our gritters and drivers have been out 14 times spreading 17,000 tonnes of salt on our roads
2. Please do check our website for changes to recycling/ waste collections
3. Shropshire local will next be in Bridgnorth Library January 5th 10am-2pm

Councillor R Ireland left the meeting at this point.

0179/2324 **FINANCE**

1. Payment Schedules

1.1 It was proposed by Councillor N Cooper, seconded by Councillor S Barlow Abstention Councillor E Marshall

RESOLVED: that the accounts amounting to £110,667.89 be approved for payment.

1.2 It was proposed by Councillor C Aked, seconded by Councillor S Barlow Unanimously agreed by all Councillors

RESOLVED: that Councillors R Connolly and N Cooper will be authorising bank payments, verifying bank statements/reconciliations and authorising payroll on Thursday 21st November 2023.

1.3 Members noted that Councillors C Aked and R Connolly, on Friday 24th November 2023 authorised bank payments and verified bank statements for October 2023 and authorised payroll for December 2023.

2. Town Bank Reconciliation Statements

Members noted the bank reconciliation statements as of the 30th November 2023. (Reconciled sum of all bank accounts (£145,222.46).

3. Accounting Reports

3.1 Budget Report

The meeting was informed that the Budget report was not on the Town Council website as stated on the agenda. The Deputy Town Clerk is to ensure that the website is updated.

3.2 Balance Sheet

The meeting was informed that the Balance sheet was not on the Town Council website as stated on the agenda. The Deputy Town Clerk is to ensure that the website is updated.

0180/2324 **DRAFT BUDGET 2024/2025**

Members had received a further draft budget that showed a potential increase of 5.89% based on all current services and previously muted amendments. A debate was held and Members were given the opportunity to ask questions. The RFO had asked Councillors, in the report, to inform Officers of any amendments, additions or deletions in services that Council may wish to make for inclusion in the final draft budget that will be discussed and



dissected at the forthcoming Finance Committee meeting of 9th January 2024. Councillors are to email the RFO over the Christmas holiday with their comments. The Finance Committee will then make final proposals to the Town Council meeting of 16th January 2024 where final approval will be given by full Council for both the budget and precept for 2024/2025.

0181/2324 **COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW**

Members had received a report from Councillor D Cooper with regards to the Community Governance Review. Further information had also been circulated, which indicated an intention for there to be a County-wide Community Governance Review after the 2025 elections.

A suggestion was made that the Town Council reiterate to Shropshire Council that we seek a review of the external boundaries of the town and also formally flag up with them that the divisional review is creating a situation where the residents of the proposed new Morfe Ward will have 50% more voting power than the rest of the town and that we would like that rectified.

It was noted that maybe the Town Council should raise a petition and show our displeasure at Bridgnorth not being included in the review in 2024.

0182/2324 **PERSONNEL COMMITTEE NEW MEMBER**

Members noted that Councillor A Chetter had joined the Personnel Committee.

0183/2324 **BORROWING CONSULTATION UPDATE**

Members received an update report on the borrowing consultation for the retaining wall project.

0184/2324 **JOINT STRATEGIC NEEDS**

The Chair asked Members to email the Business Administrator with their suggestions of local organisations for the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.

0185/2324 **ASSET & PROPERTY UPDATE**

Members had received a report from the Property Manager with regards to the duties undertaken and to be undertaken on the estate. Members were given the opportunity to ask the Property Manager questions.

0186/2324 **DLF UPDATE**

Members had received a report from the DLF Supervisor with regards to the duties undertaken and to be undertaken on the estate.

0187/2324 **REVIEW OF TOWN COUNCIL ASSETS**

Councillor T Green asked for a review on the Town Council assets. It was agreed that an overarching strategic approach was needed.

This item is to be added to the forward plan for a future meeting.

0188/2324 **ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDA**

Members discussed the following items for inclusion on future agendas:

- Review of Town Council assets
- Volunteer scheme



- Set up a programme to raise the Council profile and promote the democratic process; encourage prospective candidates for local elections

0189/2324 **GREEN SPACES GROUP**

Members noted the notes from the Green Space Group.

0190/2324 **PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSION TO MEETINGS) ACT 1960**

It was proposed by Councillor S Barlow, seconded by Councillor I Wellings
Unanimously agreed by all Councillors

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.

0191/2324 **UPDATE ON THE RETAINING WALL**

Members noted the latest report from the Town Clerk on the retaining wall project.

0192/2324 **UPDATE ON THE TOWN COUNCIL'S INCIDENTS**

Members noted that the Town Clerk had implemented a formal system to report and record incidents; incidents that fall outside of the Health & Safety.

0193/2324 **SHROPSHIRE YOUTH ASSOCIATION FOR 2024/2025**

Members asked for a draft contract to be brought to Council in January 2024 for discussion.

Mrs Williams and Mrs Follette left the meeting at this point.

0194/2324 **STAFFING UPDATE**

Members received a verbal update on staffing matters from the Chair of the Personnel Committee.

Meeting closed at 8.40pm