

**BRIDGNORTH TOWN COUNCIL****Minutes of the Bridgnorth Town Council Meeting held in the Annexe, College House on  
Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> January 2024 at 6.45pm.**

**Present:** R Connolly (Mayor)  
I Wellings (Deputy Mayor)  
C Aked  
J Buckley  
A Chetter  
D Cooper  
N Cooper  
T Green  
L Neal  
K Sawbridge

**In Attendance:** Mrs C Turner, Town Clerk  
Mrs R Williams, Deputy Town Clerk

Four members of the public

0195/2324 **WELCOME**

The Mayor issued a welcome to the meeting.

0196/2324 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

It was proposed by Councillor N Cooper, seconded by Councillor I Wellings  
Unanimously agreed by all Councillors

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

Councillor C Baines	Unwell
Councillor S Barlow	Unwell
Councillor R Ireland	Unwell
E Marshall	Personal Reason
L Rochelle	Unwell
Councillor R Seabright	Family Commitment

0197/2324 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None declared at the meeting.

0198/2324 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no public questions received prior to the meeting.

The following question was raised by a member of the public:

- 1) Is there a date fixed for the removal of the Arts Trail statues?

The Mayor informed the member of the public this would be looked into and an update provided.

0199/2324 **MINUTES**

It was proposed by Councillor I Wellings, seconded by Councillor C Aked



Unanimously agreed by all Councillors

**RESOLVED:** to approve the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> December 2023.

It was proposed by Councillor N Cooper, seconded by Councillor A Chetter

Unanimously agreed by all Councillors

**RESOLVED:** to note the minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held on Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> January 2024 and the recommendation to Full Council contained at minute number FCM59/2324 (ii):

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

Unanimously agreed by all Councillors

**RESOLVED:** to recommend the following charges for the Severn Park car park:

Up to 2 hours                      £2.50

2 hours – 4 hours                £4.00

All day                                £5.50

#### 0200/2324      **MAYOR'S AND DEPUTY MAYOR'S DIARY**

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

##### Mayor's Diary

07/12/2023      Visit Oldbury Grange for festive tea  
07/12/2023      Public Consultation drop in session  
10/12/2023      reopened Oldbury Village Hall  
12/12/2023      Public Consultation drop in session  
17/12/2023      Attended Festive Tractor Run  
25/12/2023      Attended Together at Christmas at Bridgnorth Endowed School

##### Deputy Mayor's Diary

05/12/2023      Public Consultation drop in session  
12/12/2023      Public Consultation drop in session  
19/12/2023      Public Consultation drop in session

#### 0201/2324      **MEMBERS QUESTION TIME**

There were no members questions received.

The Town Clerk informed the Members that the members questions from the last Full Council meeting held on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> December 2023 was outstanding, but this was being pulled together and confirmed that all nine (9) questions would be answered together.

#### 0202/2324      **SHROPSHIRE COUNCILLOR**

The Mayor welcomed Shropshire Councillor C Lea to the meeting.

Councillor C Lea provided the Council with a verbal update.

Good evening, Madam Mayor, Town Clerk, Councillors and members of the public.

I'm attending this evening's meeting to present you with a Shropshire Council report.



Shropshire Council are currently running an initiative with Shrewsbury Town Council in finding unwanted trees a home. People with unwanted trees have been donating them to the Shrewsbury Town Council Nursery at Weeping Cross, where they have been tended and cared for under the partnership Trees Outside of Woodland project and they are now ready to be replanted and are free for rehoming. There are a selection of trees available, these being Yew and Silver Birch up to 30cm tall, Oaks and Bird Cherry up to 1.5m and a selection of other trees up to 50cm in height. Anyone wishing to collect a tree can do so this Thursday between 8.30am and 10.45am, 8.30am until 11am on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> January and 9.30am until 12.30pm on Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> January. The nursery can be found at Weeping Cross, Cross Houses SY5 6HT.

Applications are now being invited for grants of up to £4,000 for community-based organisations in Shropshire that support wellbeing and independence. The Council are keen to grant fund activity which helps support residents to remain independent and physically and mentally well, to help prevent admissions into hospital or from reaching some form of crisis. This funding is available for any activity that is planned to be delivered between 1<sup>st</sup> April this year and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025. It is primarily aimed at organisations and groups working in Shropshire, as well as those people wishing to start up new initiatives. Any applicant will need to demonstrate how their activity supports The Shropshire Plan. Those applications which are received will be reviewed and scored based on the extent to which the proposed activity supports the Council's priorities and key criteria in the plan. The closing date for applications is midday on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> February. The grant application form and accompanying guidance can be accessed at [www.shropshire.gov.uk/shropshire-choices/adult-social-care-preventative-small-grants-programme-2024-2025/](http://www.shropshire.gov.uk/shropshire-choices/adult-social-care-preventative-small-grants-programme-2024-2025/)

The Shropshire Local Mobile Service is visiting Bridgnorth Library this Friday where advisers will be available between 10am and 2pm to offer face-to-face assistance, guidance and support to residents on Shropshire Council queries.

The Keep Shropshire Warm energy advice service which is managed by the Marches Energy Agency and whom Shropshire Council work with offer free and impartial advice on a wide range of energy issues, including supporting residents to apply for financial support and heating and insulation grants. The service can help those who are struggling with energy debts to manage and reduce them to get back on track. Advisors can be contacted on 0800 112 3743.

Last year, the UK Shared Prosperity Team at Shropshire Council were successful in securing £15 million in funding to fund various projects across Shropshire. The money was provided as part of the Government's Levelling Up agenda, with the overall objective to build pride and place and increase life chances. With 200 applications that were initially submitted, these have been whittled down to 37 projects that have already received or will shortly receive funding in the next few months. These projects include the Shropshire Manufacturing Growth Programme, Enable and the Shropshire Digital Skills Programme which offers help and support to those people who are digitally excluded.

Councillor C Lea to provide the Town Clerk with an electronic copy of the verbal update and the Town Clerk to circulate to all Members.

0203/2324

**FINANCE****1. Payment Schedules**

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



Unanimously agreed by all Councillors

**RESOLVED:** to approve the payments schedules and not the reports show payments that are to be made for the December 2023 purchase ledger invoices and all payments that have been made in accordance with Financials Regulations 5.5 for Cashbooks 1, 2, and 3 as detailed in Appendix A.

1.2 Members confirmed and note that Councillors A Chetter and D Cooper Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> January 2023 will authorise bank payments, verify bank statements and authorise payroll.

1.3 Members noted that Councillors R Connolly and N Cooper, on Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> December 23, authorised bank payments and verified bank statements for November 2023 and authorised payroll for December 2023.

## 2. Accounting Reports

Members were informed the Finance Committee had met on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2024 and the following items had been discussed and reviewed:

### 2.1 Bank Reconciliation

Members noted the Bank Reconciliation for December 2023.

### 2.2 Budget Report

Members noted the Budget report as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023.

### 2.3 Balance Sheet

Members noted the Balance sheet for December 2023.

0204/2324

## **BORROWING CONSULTATION UPDATE AND NEXT STEPS**

Members received and noted the verbal update and report tabled from the Town Clerk regarding the close of the borrowing consultation and next steps for the completion of the loan application. The Town Clerk confirmed an electronic copy of the report tabled would be circulated to all Members.

The Town Clerk provided an update on the results of the consultation.

Closing date of the consultation Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> January 2024 – midday.

Preliminary Results

Total of returns : 734

### Question 1

Are you in favour of Bridgnorth Town Council Proceeding with the retaining wall project?  
YES/NO

Result : Yes - 688 / 94% No - 46 / 6%

The result for Question 1 is Yes. Therefore, these votes will be taken forward for Question 2 results.

### Question 2



Are you in favour of Bridgnorth Town Council proceeding with the retaining wall project if it includes a council tax precept increase of 5.1% which is the equivalent of an additional £8 a year for the purpose of the annual loan repayments? YES / NO

Result out of the 688 / 94% who voted Yes to Question 1 :

Yes - 582 / 85%

No - 106 / 15%

The result for Question 2 is Yes.

Members were informed there was still a small number of spoilt papers returned which need to have a second verification check. It was explained that spoilt papers included no answers marked/indicated on return, no names, no address and in some cases no information at all.

Councillor J Buckley ask the Town Clerk to note a thank you to everyone for their work in completing the consultation and collation of the results. The number of returns was an endorsement of all the work completed, time and effort in completing consultation.

0205/2324

### **SEVERN PARK CONCESSIONS 2024/2025**

Members received and considered the report and recommendation from the RFO regarding the concessions for Severn Park.

It was proposed by Councillor N Cooper, seconded by Councillor C Aked

Against by Councillor I Wellings

**RESOLVED:** to agree the following for Severn Park concession for 2024/25:

- To permit up to 3 opportunities for concessions to trade from Severn Park (light refreshments, ice cream van and children's entertainment)
- To set level of minimum fees be required for any concession: Ice Cream Van - £5,850, Light refreshments - £1,200, Children's Entertainment (e.g. Bouncy Castle) - £1000
- Where there is more than one applicant, the RFO may ask for sealed bids – [*above the minimum fee*] - to be submitted or negotiate a best price.
- That the Town Clerk, in conjunction with the DLF Supervisor, will have delegated authority to approve any concession and its location.
- That all concession payments should be made in advance. With the RFO being authorised to negotiate staged payments where the concession holder has a track record of paying promptly.

0206/2324

### **APPROVAL OF TOWN COUCNIL FEES**

Members received, reviewed and considered the revised list of fees for 2024/2025.

Members noted some fees proposed were to remain the same level as 2023/2024 with the exception of market fees to be increased by 6.7% and cemetery fees by 5%.

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

Against by Councillor I Wellings

**RESOLVED:** to agree and set the Town Council Fees for 2024/2025 as detailed within the report provided Bridgnorth Town Council Fees WEF 1 April 2024.

Councillor J Buckley asked that the Carbon Act for Cemeteries was considered as part of the fees review for the following year.

**0207/2324 DRAFT BUDGET 2024/2025**

Members received a verbal update and revised draft budget from the RFO. The Chair of the Finance Committee informed Members of the work completed to complete the draft budget and discussed at the Finance Committee held on the 9<sup>th</sup> January 2024 where a recommendation for the balanced budget was agreed.

The increase for band D properties of 4.88% equivalent to £7.60 and the additional loan charges were discussed, this equated to a total increase of just under 10% / £15.33 for a band D property.

Members held a debate regarding the draft budget for 2024/2025. It was confirmed that the risks for the budget and impact on the Town Council services had been reviewed.

It was proposed by Councillor N Cooper, seconded by Councillor K Sawbridge  
Unanimously agreed by all Councillors

**RESOLVED:** to approve the draft budget as presented subject to the Council receiving formal approval from central government to borrow.

**0208/2324 WORKING GROUP FOR THE REVIEW OF TOWN COUNCIL BUILDINGS AND ASSETS**

Members debated the requirement for the setting a new Working Group, the purpose and remit for the group.

It was proposed by Councillor R Connolly, seconded by Councillor I Wellings  
Unanimously agreed by all Councillors

**RESOLVED:** to agree a Working Group for the purpose of reviewing the Town Council buildings and assets, for Councillors Wellings, Green and Aked to be appointed, for the Town Clerk to email all Councillors for any additional members, for the first task of the Working Group to draft terms of reference and to have these approved at a future Town Council meeting. For this Working Group to be supported by the Property Manager providing information.

**0209/2324 MEETING WITH THE POLICE CRIME COMMISSIONER (PCC)**

Members debated inviting the Police Crime Commissioner to a future Town Council meeting to discuss the current policing concerns and issues within Bridgnorth.

It was discussed that this was to be arranged prior to the May 2024, before the PCC elections in May 2024 and if the PCC could not attend in person this could be arranged using Teams.

The following items were noted as points to be included in the discussions:

- Vehicle theft
- ASB
- Lack of police presence

It was proposed by Councillor I Wellings, seconded by Councillor J Buckley  
Unanimously agreed by all Councillors

**RESOLVED:** to agree for the Town Clerk to invite the Police Crime Commissioner to a future Town Council meeting, if unable to attend for a Teams meeting to discuss points of concern for policing in Bridgnorth.

The Town Clerk was asked to also inform the Clerks from Tasley and surrounding Parish Councils when the meeting would be taking place.



**0210/2324 TOWN COUNCIL DROP IN / SURGERIES**

Members considered and debated at length the option for the Town Council Councillors to hold quarterly drop-in sessions within the community and a rota for Members to attend these on behalf of the Town Council. It was noted that this was raised by members of the public at the consultation drop-in sessions.

It was proposed by Councillor L Neal, seconded by Councillor A Chetter

Against by Councillor D Cooper

**RESOLVED:** to agree for the Town Clerk to arrange for quarterly Town Council drop in session / surgeries to be attended by Town Councillors and for an invitation to all Councillors to be sent and rota to be agreed for these.

**0211/2324 UPDATE BRIDGNORTH MEETING WITH SHROPSHIRE COUNCIL**

Members were provided a verbal update from the Town Clerk following the meeting with the Assistant Director of Economy and Place at Shropshire Council. It was informed that this meeting resulted from discussions held at the Bridgnorth Future Partnership meeting and main aim is to address operational issues that are outstanding with Shropshire Council, these operational issues are for outstanding requests that are 6 months and more.

**0212/2324 FLOOD UPDATE**

Members received a verbal update from Councillor I Wellings regarding the recent flooding, it's effect on the local residents and issue and concerns relating to the operation response and communication during and following the receding of the river.

The Town Clerk was asked to circulate a copy of the report from Councillor I Wellings.

Members were updated on the meeting held with the National Flood Forum (NFF) on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> January 2024 and the new way of working between the NFF and involvement of the Town Council as a partner in developing the Bridgnorth Flood Action Plan and involvement in working with the Bridgnorth Flood Action Group (BFLAG) and agency partners to ensure a fit for purpose plan is agreed and communicated.

The Town Clerk was asked to complete an update report and present at future meeting of the Town Council following this meeting with the NFF.

**0213/2324 TOWN MEETING MAY 2024**

Members debated guest speakers for the next Town Meeting in May 2024 and made the following suggestions to the Town Clerk to explore and consider:

- Environment Agency - Flooding
- Energy Reduction Steering Group
- Community Transport Group
- Community Litter Pickers
- Community Gardeners
- John Adams - bereavement and children's support activist.

**0214/2324 CROWD FUNDING**



Members debated the option of Crowd Funding from visitors outside the town and for local businesses to make a voluntary contribution towards the cost of the repairs to the retaining wall.

It was proposed by Councillor A Chetter, seconded by Councillor L Neal  
Abstained by Councillor J Buckley

**RESOLVED:** to agree for Councillor A Chetter to draft communication and information for Crown Funding and to debate at a further Town Council meeting.

0215/2324 **UPDATE TOWN CLERKS MEETING**

Members received a verbal update from the Town Clerk regarding the Town Clerks meeting attended and the initial conversation regarding Town Clerks collaboratively working together on common projects and initiatives I.E. joint procurement, etc. The Town Clerk was asked to bring an update paper for debate at a future Town Council meeting.

0216/2324 **ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDA**

Members discussed the following items for inclusion on future agendas:

- Letter received by the Mayor from League of Friends
- Shropshire Council Local Cycling & Walking Plan - Final report
- Holiday lets and impact on community life.
- Events
- Mayor and Deputy Mayor nominations for 2024/25

0217/2324 **PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSION TO MEETINGS) ACT 1960**

It was proposed by Councillor N Cooper, seconded by Councillor L Neal  
Against by Councillor J Buckley

**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.

0218/2324 **UPDATE ON THE RETAINING WALL**

Members noted the verbal updated from the Town Clerk on the retaining wall project. This included:

- The current position regarding the reclaim from the operator
- The current position on the monitoring in place
- Next Steps

0219/2324 **SHROPSHIRE YOUTH ASSOCIATION FOR 2024/2025**

Members debated the offer provided for youth provision and the merits of this service in the community.

It was proposed by Councillor A Chetter, seconded by Councillor N Cooper  
Unanimously agreed by all Councillors

**RESOLVED:** to agree for the 2024/2025 youth provision and service to be delivered by SYA at the agreed price supplied by their quotation and within the budget/funding envelope.

The Town Clerk was asked to contact the Clerk at Tasley and discuss funding for this provision from the Parish Council.





It was proposed by Councillor D Cooper, seconded by Councillor K Sawbridge  
Unanimously agreed by all Councillors

**RESOLVED:** to agree to suspend standing orders to enable the remaining items of business on the agenda to be concluded.

Mrs Williams left the meeting at this point.

0220/2324

**STAFFING UPDATE**

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

Meeting closed at 9.20pm

DRAFT