

**BRIDGNORTH TOWN COUNCIL****Minutes of the Bridgnorth Town Council Meeting held in the Annexe, College House
on
Tuesday 20 February 2024 at 6.45pm.**

Present: R Connolly (Mayor)
I Wellings (Deputy Mayor)
C Aked
S Barlow
J Buckley
A Chetter
D Cooper
N Cooper
R Ireland
T Green
K Sawbridge BEM

In Attendance: Mrs C Turner, Town Clerk
Mrs R Williams - Deputy Town Clerk / RFO

0230/2324 WELCOME

The Mayor issued a welcome to the meeting.

The Mayor informed Members of the additional agenda item which had been previously circulated.

Proposed by Councillor R Connolly, seconded by Councillor A Chetter
Unanimously agreed by all Councillors

RESOLVED: to bring forward the additional agenda item number 21 to 18 on the agenda before the agenda item Public Bodies.

0231/2324 COUNCILLOR REQUEST FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Members were provided with an update to consider a leave of absence request from Councillor C Baines from March 2024 due to personal reasons discussed with the Town Clerk.

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

RESOLVED: that the Committee agree for a six month leave of absence for Councillor C Baines from March 2024.

0232/2324 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

RESOLVED: that the Committee accept the apologies and reasons for absence for the following Councillors:

C Baines	-	Unwell
E Marshall	-	Personal reasons
L Neal	-	Unwell
L Rochelle	-	Personal reasons



R Seabright - Work Commitment

0234/2324

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declaration of interests were provided:

Councillor J Buckley informed was a Shropshire Councillor
Councillor R Connolly informed was a Shropshire Councillor.

The Town Clerk thanked both members and informed that they were already on the disclosable pecuniary interest information held at the Town Council office.

0235/2324

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Members were advised that a member of the public had raised questions, as detailed, the Mayor read out the questions and provided a verbal answer:

Question 1.

Why did the Council accept, via SALC, the advice of the Parkinson Partnership on whether it need not put repair work on the Cliff Railway retaining wall out to tender, when the Parkinson Partnership is not a firm of lawyers or accountants, but specialists on advising local councils on matters pertaining to VAT?

Response Q1.

The Town Council is a member of both SALC Shropshire Association of Local Councils and NALC National Association of Local Councils. A member benefit is to raise questions via SALC on matters for clarity.

SALC is a not for profit membership organisation representing the parish and town councils of Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin. It provides information about the operation and powers of parish and town councils, and parish meetings.

The question regarding procurement was raised via SALC and the response received was from their partner Parkinson Partnership. Parkinson Partnership offer training, advice and support to the member councils giving responses to finance-related questions.

The advice was accepted from Parkinson Partnership as they are a trusted source of advice and guidance used by SALC in answering member councils' questions and queries on financial matters including procurement.

Question 2.

Does the council not think that it was misleading to have informed the public that the Parkinson Partnership had unequivocally given advice that it was permissible not to put the work out to tender, when the document provided by it stated, inter alia, '...a council must comply with its own Standing Orders and Financial Regulations and if those regulations require an open invitation and formal tender process, the council should follow them'?

Response Q2.

The advice and guidance received from the Parkinson Partnership was sort via SALC.

The question was based on the remedial works being of an urgent nature, identified through the specialist structural engineer's structural report which stated a major health & safety risk of the retaining wall failing with the consequences being risk to life.



Health and safety was and still is the absolute main consideration and over everything else has the priority.

The Town Council does not agree that it has mislead the public with the information it has provided regarding the advice from Parkinson Partnership. After receiving the advice, the Town Council reviewed both its Standing Orders and Financial Regulations to ensure that the requirements for the work to be executed were compliant with these financial regulations for this emergency situation.

The member of the public made a statement to point out that the retaining wall posed no risk to anyone once the station was closed.

0236/2324

MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor N Cooper, seconded by Councillor by C Aked
Abstained by Councillors Ireland and Buckley – not in attendance at the meeting.

RESOLVED: to approve the minutes of the Extra-Ordinary Town Council meeting held on Thursday 8th February 2024 as a true record of the business transacted.

Members were informed of the error in the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on Tuesday 21st November 2023 and were re-presented with the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on Tuesday 21st November 2023 to approve.

0157/2324 Minutes of the Town Council meeting held on the 11th October 2023 were proposed by Councillor S Barlow and during the vote was abstained by Councillor S Barlow who was not in attendance at the meeting held on the 11th October 2023.

It was proposed by Councillor R Connolly, seconded by Councillor by S Barlow
Abstained by Councillors Green and Buckley – not in attendance at the meeting.

RESOLVED: to approve the re-presented minutes of the Extra-Ordinary Town Council meeting held on Tuesday 21st November 2024 as a true record of the business transacted and note the error in the resolution number 0157/234 Minutes of the Town Council meeting held on the 11th October 2023.

0237/2324

MAYOR'S AND DEPUTY MAYOR'S DIARY

Members noted the Mayor's and Deputy Mayor's Diary for January 2024.

0238/2324

MEMBERS QUESTION TIME

Members were informed responses would be provided for the members questions raised by Councillor R Ireland at the meeting on 19th December 2023 – resolution number 0177/2324, as follows:

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.

Question 1.

Please confirm these figures are correct?

Response to Question 1.

I can confirm the attached figures are correct. This is detailed in the breakdown previously provided on 5th December 2023 in the excel spreadsheet.



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 standdown 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.

Question 2.

Please confirm whether these calculations are correct?

Response to Question 2.

I can confirm that the fixed price cost for phase 2b was £104,000. (Excluding VAT)

I can confirm that the stand down costs for 15 weeks, as detailed in the breakdown previously provided 5th December 2023, was £48,400.

I can confirm this is a total of £152,400 currently for Phase 2b. Please note the information below.

The Town Council are currently waiting for the last invoice from the contractor of £9,000. For the additional stand down costs of £1,500 for 6 weeks. As detailed in the response dated 5th December 2023 the invoices were paid at £3,000. for the Full Stand Down from 31/05/2023 to 12/07/2023 – the contractor agreed to invoice the Town Council the reduced amount for this time to assist the Town Council with both cash flow and the uncertainty in how long the stand down would be.

This additional invoice will take the 15 weeks stand down cost from £48,400 already invoiced to £57,400. Once this invoice has been received.

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?

Question 3.

Please confirm I have understood this correctly?

Response to Question 3.

The difference between the full stand down charge and the partial stand down charge is £1,500 is not only labour costs but also transport costs / vans/ public liability insurance / scaffold hire and general employment costs and prelims associated with the contract.

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.

Question 4.

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

Response to Question 4.

I am unable to answer this question, this is commercial information regarding a contractor's operation and business. This project was agreed at a fix price cost, but I can confirm this was managed by the main contractor as is normal practice.

Question 5.

- a) Were standdown charges quantified or agreed in this contract or earlier contracts with Garvey?
b) If so can we please see a copy of the relevant contract clauses?

Response to Question 5.

The contract was agreed using the JCT Minor works building contract 2016. All parties were involved with these discussions were following the recommendation from Walker Cotter (Quantity Surveyor)

The stand down were dealt with using the Section 3. Control of Works. 3.6. using the variations element of the contract and the variation was the stand down. The price was agreed and negotiated with the contractor by the Quantity Surveyor prior to the contractor carrying out the variation.

Question 6.

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?

Response Question 6.

The stand down price and standing charges were discussed with the main contractor as part of the variation discussions and the QS was fully involved in the process for this.

The variation was not in the control of the Town Council due to the fact that we did not know how long the stand down would take. The stand down was due to waiting for legal documents to be signed by the operator.

During the stand down period further discussions were held with the main contractor to reduce costs to the Council for the stand down period, this was completed with an agreed partial stand down and after discussions a site closure, thus reducing the costs overall.

Question 7.

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

Response Question 7.

I can confirm this was managed by the main contractor and not sub-contracted out by 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.

I can confirm that at the initial site meeting with the contractor the use of a structural engineer was discussed. A structural engineer was sourced via the contractor for Phase 1, this was for the initial inspection, advice, and initial report. The Town Council only paid for this service through the main contractor for Phase 1, all other phases the Structural Engineer worked directly for Town Council. The Town Council did contact other structural engineers,



but they were unable to attend at such short notice before the Christmas period to provide the advice, guidance and report required at the Phase 1 stage of the project.

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

Question 8.

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

Response Question 8.

The project team investigated the value of using an independent QS for this project. A member of the project team contacted a number of potential QS's, and Walker Cotter were selected based on their experience, availability and Fees, which were considered by the project team to be fair and reasonable. Competitive quotations are not required for Professional services, but it was decided to follow Bridgnorth Town Council procurement rules.

Finally Question 9.

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?

Response Question 9.

The Town Council are currently waiting for the last invoice from the contractor of £9,000. For the additional stand down costs of £1,500 for 6 weeks. As detailed in the response dated 5th December 2023 the invoices were paid at £3,000. for the Full Stand Down from 31/05/2023 to 12/07/2023 – the contractor agreed to invoice the Town Council the reduced amount for this time to assist the Town Council with both cash flow and the uncertainty in how long the stand down would be.

Members were advised Councillor E Marshall had raised questions, as follows:

Question 1

In December 2022 the Town Council raised a cheque for £500.00, payable to Severn Valley Landscapes, which was signed by Councillors Ross Ireland and David Cooper. This was understood to be a part payment, in advance, for the removal of three Catch-me-if-you-can Arts Trail 'statues'. At the 17th January 2023 Town Council Meeting, the following was recorded in the minutes – see minute 0340/2223 Finance Item 1.

Accounts paid – December 2022

Councillors were given the opportunity to ask questions, these included:

The advanced payment for the removal of 3 statues from the Arts Trail – the Council were informed that the monies had been ringfenced within the budget and the payment was within the budget.

Cllr. Marshall asked the Town Clerk to note that he was not comfortable with making the payment in advance.

It was proposed by Cllr. Barlow, seconded by Cllr. Neal

Abstained by Cllr. Marshall

RESOLVED that the accounts amounting to £128,556.85 be retrospectively approved for payment.



The part payment of money so far in advance of the anticipated date of removal is extremely unusual and there are no technical or other reasons that merit such payments in advance for a relatively simple task of removing 3 statues. It is now mid-February 2024. Have any of these 3 'statues' been removed?

Response to Q1.

None yet.

Question 2

Throughout 2023 there has been much talk of retaining 3 'statues'. If these 3 'statues' are put to one side, this leaves ten statues that were originally supposed to be removed at some time during the Autumn of 2023.

How many of these ten 'statues' have been removed?

Response to Q2.

None yet.

Question 3

Following on from Question 2 above regarding the ten 'statues', on how many has physical work started to remove them?

Response to Q3.

None yet.

Question 4

What is the name of the organisation that is currently responsible for removing the ten 'statues' and who are the leaders of this organisation? I ask this question because presumably the Town Council has contacts with these people, e.g. releasing funds held by the Town Council.

Response to Q4.

3 of the statues will be removed by Severn Valley Landscapes

5 of the statues will be removed by JSR Construction.

2 of the statues will remain on the site of their sponsor - SVR and Rugby Club

(The 3 of the statues, which are not part of the ten, will remain under the management of the lead sponsor).

James Gittins is the leader of Severn Valley Landscapes.

John Roberts is the leader of JSR Construction.

Question 5

The answers to the above questions could indicate that there has been no start to physically remove any of the 'statues'. If so, does the Town Council have any information about when a start will be made and the task finished, and could the Council indicate likely dates.

Response to Q5.

The community group is working with two local contractors (Severn Valley Landscapes and JSR Construction) as they are offering to do this work for reduced rates / free we are therefore being very flexible to work within their timescales. The community group is hopeful that this work will be completed in the coming months without incurring any additional costs.



0239/2324

SHROPSHIRE COUNCILLOR

Members received a verbal update from Shropshire Councillor, Councillor Rachel Connolly on the report provided and supplementary Information for Shropshire Council which could be shared. Town Clerk was asked for forward the supplementary information to all members.

Verbal update included:

Bridgnorth Future Partnership:

On January 9th a meeting took place with Shropshire Councillors for Bridgnorth along with the Town Clerk and the Deputy Mayor. Updates were given regarding issues around the Town. I am pleased to report that the markings around the 4 roundabouts near the Smithfield have now been re-painted. The next meetings are 19th and 20th February.

Tasley Parish:

The Tasley Neighbourhood Development Plan Steering Group have carried out a survey for residents to express their views to assist in the compilation of the Tasley Neighbourhood Plan. The survey closed on 14th February.

Free health Checks at Bridgnorth Livestock Market.

The Community Wellbeing Outreach Team visited the Livestock Market on January 23rd and 30th with a one stop mobile service offering free mini health checks and advice. These were pilot sessions with plans for more throughout the year.

Increase in parking charges in Bridgnorth:

At Cabinet on January 18th, it was announced that Shropshire Council intend to increase parking charges across the county. Hourly rates for Car Parks will increase by 20p per hour as well as increases to residents on street permits and season tickets. The introduction of charges on car parks that are currently free on Sundays and Bank Holidays is also proposed as is charging full rate on Sundays and Bank Holidays for car parks which currently charge 50% of the normal rate. This means that Listley Street Car Park charges will be increasing from 60 pence per hour on Sundays and Bank Holidays to £1.40. An increase of over 130%. This proposal has been called in for further discussion on February 19th at Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Joint Strategic Needs Assessment:

Shropshire Councillors for Bridgnorth and surrounding areas met with officers from Shropshire Council on 30th January. The next round of place-based assessments are due to be launched in early February which will include the Bridgnorth place plan area. Each place plan area is treated separately to ensure focussed and targeted community engagement and collect the best quality information and data possible to accurately and beneficially inform future plans and actions. This was the first meeting with more to follow and Councillors gave suggestions for groups in the area that could be engaged with. For more information, please see Placebased Joint Strategic Needs Assessment | Shropshire Council.

School Streets Pilot:

The School Streets Pilot Scheme is due to begin in April. Six schools in Shropshire have been chosen and Castlefields in Bridgnorth is one of them. Streets outside school gates will have temporary restrictions on motorised traffic – except for permit holders – during school drop off and pick up times. Signs are now in place near Castlefields School with letters going out to residents shortly with information and advice on how to apply for permits. Under new



'moving traffic offences' legislation Shropshire Council will be able to enforce School Streets using ANPR cameras.

Planned works on Bypass:

Planned tree work along A458 Bypass between 19th and 23rd February. This will involve a lane closure on the downhill lane and the overtaking uphill lane to be used for southbound traffic. The lane closure will be in place day and night for the duration of the works.

Local Plan Update:

Shropshire Councillors were given a briefing by Eddie West (Planned Policy and Strategy Manager) on February 1st 2024. At time of writing Councillors are waiting for information that can be shared with Town and Parish Councillors.

Next Full Council Meeting Thursday 29th February at Shirehall.

0240/2324

FINANCE

1. Payment Schedule

Members noted receipt of a list of payments for approval.

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

Unanimously agreed by all Councillors

1.1. **RESOLVED:** that the accounts amounting to £39,633.97 be approved for payment.

1.2. **RESOLVED:** to authorise Councillors N Cooper and Councillor C Aled to sign the bank payments on Friday 23rd February 2024.

1.3. Members noted that Councillor A Chetter and D Cooper on Thursday 18th January 2024, authorised bank payments and verified bank statement for December 2023 and authorised payroll for January 2024.

2. Accounting Reports

2.1. Members noted the Bank Reconciliations for January 2024.

2.2. Members noted the Budget Summary report as at 31st January 2024.

2.3. Members noted the Balance sheet for January 2024. (£562,134)

Current Year Fund	(£104,993)
General Fund:	£274,317
Earmarked Reserves:	£220,177
Useable Capital Receipts:	£172,633

0241/2324

MAYORAL NOMINATIONS

Mayoral nominations for the municipal year 2024 / 2025 were discussed and members were invited to propose nominations for Mayor for the municipal year 2024 / 2025.



Councillor J Buckley nominated Councillor I Wellings, due to him being a good councillor, who has dedicated a lot of time in the past year on the retaining wall project and the community. This nomination was seconded by Councillor A Chetter.

Members were asked for any other nominations, none were received.

Members were asked to vote on the nomination. The vote was For 8. Against 0. Abstained 3.
RESOLVED: That Councillor I Wellings be the Mayor elect for the municipal year 2024 / 2025.

Councillor I Wellings accepted the position.

The Mayor, Councillor R Connolly congratulated Councillor I Wellings on being appointed.

Members were invited to propose nominations for Deputy Mayor elect for the municipal year 2024 / 2025.

Councillor S Barlow nominated Councillor C Aked, due to all the hard work and dedication to the retaining wall project and being a fantastic councillor. The nomination was seconded by Councillor K Sawbridge.

Members were asked for any other nominations, none were received.

Members were asked to vote on the nomination. The vote was For 10. Against 0. Abstained 1.
RESOLVED: That Councillor C Aked to be Deputy Mayor elect for the municipal year 2024 / 2025.

Councillor C Aked accepted the position.

The Mayor, Councillor R Connolly congratulated Councillor C Aked on being appointed.

0242/2324 **SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS**

Members reviewed and debated the schedule of meetings draft provided.

Proposed by Councillor R Connolly, seconded by Councillor I Wellings
Unanimously agreed by all Councillors

RESOLVED: to agree the schedule of meetings for 2024/2025 with a change for the Finance Committee meetings to be held at the end of the month.

0243/2324 **TOWN MEETING**

Members debated the proposed date for the Town Meeting and location at Castle Hall.

The date of Wednesday 24th April 2024 at Castle Hall was noted by all Councillors and agreed by the Mayor.

0244/2324 **CROWD FUNDING**

Members received and debated the report provided by Councillor A Chetter regarding the crowd fund for the repairs to the remaining retaining wall on the lower tier of the Castle Walk. Members were given the opportunity to ask questions.

Proposed by Councillor N Cooper, seconded by A Chetter



Abstained by Councillor K Sawbridge

RESOLVED: agree for the crowd funding to be put in place, for the Town Clerk to work with Councillors A Chetter and C Aked to agree the wording to be used and create the page, to include the aim of this crowd fund to be for none local tax payers to contribute. For the monies received through the crowd fund to be ring fenced for the retaining wall project and a new budget code including a reserve code to be created for this.

Councillor A Chetter was thanked for his work in producing the proposals.

0245/2324 **LETTER FROM THE LEAGUE OF FRIENDS AT BRIDGNORTH HOSPITAL**

Members received the letter from the League of Friends at Bridgnorth Hospital and the request for a Councillor to become a Vice President for a three-year period.

Proposed by Councillor K Sawbridge, seconded by Councillor A Chetter

Unanimously agreed by all Councillors

RESOLVED: for Councillor K Sawbridge to be the Council representative as a Vice President to the League of Friends at Bridgnorth Hospital to the next councillor election in May 2025.

The Town Clerk was asked to inform the League of Friends at Bridgnorth Hospital the decision was not for three years due to the councillor election in May 2025.

0246/2324 **BRIDGNORTH PLACE PLAN AREA (PPA) HEALTH AND WELLBEING SURVEY**

Members debated the information provided regarding the Bridgnorth Place Plan Area (PPA) Health and Wellbeing. The Town Clerk was asked to seek clarify on the request to members and the support required:

- When the survey starts as the information provided states 12th February for 8 weeks.
- What is the expectation and involvement required.
- What is the expectation of the delivery of the survey.

The Town Clerk was asked to provide an update to Councillors once the clarification had been received and provide an update at a future Town Council meeting.

0247/2324 **ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDA**

Members asked the Town Clerk to provide a copy of the forward plan information for future agenda items.

Items for consideration on a future agenda:

- An event for volunteers
- Shropshire Council budget consultation and the future plans on the library provision
- Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure plan – Shropshire Council Cabinet in March 2024 and the further consultation required in April 2024.

0248/2324 **ADDITIONAL AGENDA ITEM BROUGHT FORWARD – COMMUNICATION FROM THE LEADER OF SHROPSHIRE COUNCIL**



Members debated the communication from the Leader of Shropshire Council regarding the Shropshire Council budget consultation for 2024/25 and the proposed savings within this to achieve the Medium-Term Financial Strategy which outlines a £62 million funding gap.

Councillor D Cooper informed members of the launch of the Big Conversation in 2015/16 relating to proposed savings. At this time the Town Council was contacted to start conversations regarding the library service, youth provision and leisure facilities within the Town. At this time the Town Council formed a working group to complete background working including services used by visitors out of the parish from other parish areas.

This was to be a watching brief due to the Town Clerk as yet not having been approached by Shropshire Council to open discussions and the Town Council may in the future have a working group if required.

Members debated what the services may look like in the future and the impact on the community.

0249/2324 **PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSION TO MEETINGS) ACT 1960**

It was proposed by Councillor I Wellings, seconded by Councillor S Barlow
Abstained by Councillor J Buckley and R Ireland.

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.

0250/2324 **RETAINING WALL UPDATE**

Members received a verbal update from the Chair of the working group and the Town Clerk regarding the retaining wall project and progress on the public works loan board loan.

0251/2324 **STAFFING UPDATE**

Members received a verbal update from the Chair of the Personnel Committee and the Town Clerk on the confidential report provided. This update included:

- Staff updates and information
- Health & Safety Update
- Training Update
- Recruitment Update

The Town Clerk left the meeting at this point

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

RESOLVED: to accept the recommendation for the Town Clerk to receive 1 SCP increase in salary from 5th December 2023 following her annual appraisal.

The Town Clerk returned to the meeting

Meeting closed at 8.55pm.