

Church Stretton Town Council

MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD VIA ZOOM REMOTE MEETING PLATFORM ON TUESDAY 22nd SEPTEMBER 2020 at 7.00 p.m.

Those present: *Councillors:* Cllr L Antill, Cllr S Baker, Cllr M Braid, Cllr C Carson, Cllr N Carter, Cllr L Chapman, Cllr H Claytonsmith, Cllr H Luff, Cllr M Morris, Cllr R Hickman, Cllr M Walker, Cllr B Welch, Cllr D Wilks.
Officers: Mr. C. Maclean (Locum Town Clerk), Miss B. Clarke (Responsible Financial Officer), Mr. M. Turner (Amenities and Services Officer)
Unitary Councillors:
Members of the Public: 4

20.035 WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed Councillors and members of the public to the second meeting to be held remotely.

20.036 TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES

Apologies were received and accepted from Mr. D. Chetwood (Town Clerk).

20.037 DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

To declare any disclosable pecuniary interest in a matter to be discussed at the meeting and which is not included in the register of interests (in accordance with the new code of Conduct adopted by Church Stretton Town Council on 26th June 2012). **NONE**

20.038 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

One resident commented on the planning application currently with Shropshire Council in relation to Caradoc Yard, All Stretton. It was noted that a number of parties had raised objections to the application and that Highways England had raised concerns including those relating to volume of traffic entering and exiting the site and issues over highway safety.

The resident also noted that concerns were also expressed over the applicant's operating licence not covering current trading operations.

The resident further commented that concerns had been raised with Shropshire Council over the perceived delay in seeing further correspondence from other parties being displayed on the Planning portal thereby reducing the time allowed for others to review and comment.

Councillors were advised by the resident that the All Village Stretton Society were preparing a detailed submission and their support would be sought. Letters will be sent to each Councillor to seek their comment and support to the Society's position.

The resident's closing comment noted that the current concerns and objections are not reflected in the current stance of the Town Council. Cllr Claytonsmith advised the resident that whilst the Town Council's current stance was neutral this would be reviewed on sight of the applicant's responses to the points that have been raised. Councillors were aware of the concerns over the site that enforcement may be appropriate to address some of these.

20.039 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES taken at the Town Council Meeting held on 11th August 2020

The Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 11th August 2020 had been circulated.

Proposed by Cllr Walker, seconded by Cllr Wilks and

RESOLVED (unanimously) to confirm and adopt the Minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 11th August 2020 as correct, and these were duly signed by the Chairman as a true record.

20.040 **SHROPSHIRE COUNCIL'S DRAFT LOCAL PLAN CONSULTATION**

a) ***Town Council's Response to Regulation 18: Pre-Submission Draft of the Shropshire Local Plan 2016 to 2038***

Councillors noted the planned response on behalf of the Town Council and whilst the document is the result of the previous drafts Cllr Clayton-Smith requested Councillors to let her know by 24th September of any further final adjustments prior to submission to Shropshire Council.

Proposed by Cllr Walker, seconded by Cllr Wilks and

RESOLVED (11 in favour, 2 abstain) to accept the response and agree its submission to Shropshire Council.

20.041 **FINANCIAL MATTERS**

a) ***Presentation of 2019/2020 Accounts and Accounting Statements***

Councillors noted the contents of the Accounts and the Accounting Statements for 2019/2020.

Proposed by Cllr Welch, seconded by Cllr Baker and

RESOLVED (unanimously) to accept the Accounts as correct, and that the Chairman sign these as a true record.

b) ***Statement from Internal Auditor***

Councillors noted the contents of the Annual Internal Audit Report and his Accompanying Report with Recommendations. Councillors expressed their thanks to the RFO for all the effort undertaken to address the accounting issues.

Proposed by Cllr Chapman, seconded by Cllr Baker and

RESOLVED (unanimously) to accept the Internal Audit Report and that the Council implement the Recommendations as set out by the Internal Auditor in his report.

c) ***Appointment of Internal Auditor for 2020/2021***

Councillors considered the appointment of the Internal Auditor for 2020/2021 and whether the invitation be extended to the current Auditor, JDH Business Services Ltd..

Proposed by Cllr Welch, seconded by Cllr Clayton-Smith and

RESOLVED (unanimously) that the invitation be extended to JDH Business Services Ltd to audit the Accounts for 2020/2021.

d) ***Completion of Annual Governance Statement***

Councillors considered the statements within the Annual Governance Statement and agreed these were correct.

Proposed by Cllr Luff, seconded by Cllr Morris and

RESOLVED (unanimously) that the Annual Governance Statement be signed by the Chairman.

e) ***Future Financial Reporting Arrangements***

The RFO advised Councillors that the feedback received to date showed a preference for six-monthly reporting of financial performance.

The RFO advised Councillors that the feedback on the requirements for reporting of the Council's financial performance had not been clear. To date, responses showed 4 Councillors seeking monthly reporting, 4 for quarterly and 2 for half-yearly. Cllr Chapman suggested that the 2 Councillors seeking half-yearly reporting be merged into the 4 seeking quarterly.

Proposed by Cllr Chapman and

RESOLVED (unanimously) that the financial reporting updates of the Council's performance be quarterly and that the financial reporting updates of the Charities' performance be half-yearly.

f) ***First Six Months of 2020/2021 Update***

The RFO advised Councillors that due to the efforts to address the VAT enquiries the update has been delayed. As a result of COVID, Council expenditure has been limited to the utilities, IT, some outdoor expenditure and staff costs. Some income has been received from the tennis and bowls clubs. As a result of the reduced number of items, effort to catch up on the reporting is targeted for end October.

g) **Full Year Projections**

The RFO advised Councillors that as she had not been able to complete the work to report the first six months of the year, the projections for the full year remained outstanding. An update will be provided as soon as possible.

h) **VAT Review**

The RFO advised Councillors that the work to complete the Partial Exemption calculations was near completion and the findings are awaited from the Consultants.

20.042 **CHARITIES CONSOLIDATION**

The RFO advised Councillors that work continued to be undertaken by the Solicitor investigating the effort to merge the Brooksbury Charity and Russell's Meadow. Some concern had been expressed over the costs but enquiries with the Solicitor identified that the bulk of the costs had been incurred. The enquiries being made were also considering the impact on the Council's VAT position.

Proposed by Cllr Walker, seconded by Cllr Antill and

RESOLVED (unanimously) that the Solicitor continues work to merge the Brooksbury Charity and Russell's Meadow.

20.043 **COUNCIL DOCUMENTATION**a) **Review of Standing Orders and Financial Regulations**

The Locum Clerk advised Councillors that effort would be completed to review the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations with the target to present the updated documents to Council within the next two months.

20.044 **EXECUTIVE FORUM**a) **Terms of Reference**

Councillors noted the proposed Terms of Reference. Some discussion held on whether this forum should cover risk assessments and financial matters.

Proposed by Cllr Welch, seconded by Cllr Walker and

RESOLVED (11 in favour, 2 abstain) that the Terms of Reference be accepted and apply to this group.

20.045 **STREETLIGHTS REVIEW**

The Locum Clerk advised Councillors that due to current work pressures some delays were being experienced in progressing the review with potential partners. In the meantime, where it was identified that columns were at risk, these are being replaced.

20.046 **AMENITIES & SERVICES OFFICER UPDATE**

Councillors congratulated the ASO on his new appointment. The ASO updated Councillors on the following topics.

a) **Market**

A meeting was held with the Franchise Holder and Cllrs Baker and Carson. It was agreed that the re-tendering of the Franchise be shelved for the time being. Noting the cost of any expansion of the current market, it was agreed to defer this proposal and a letter was sent to the Franchisee confirming the basis of the market operations in relation to COVID compliance.

b) **Remembrance Day / Armistice Day Arrangements**

Discussions are ongoing with the Royal British Legion on the most appropriate arrangements for this year's events. Alternative venues to the War Memorial under consideration but decisions on arrangements are subject to Government guidelines.

c) **Social Distancing in SHI**

Some users are now returning to the SHI, subject to compliance with COVID restrictions. These arrangements remain subject to review.

d) ***Estate Projects***

The Town Clerk's illness and COVID have restricted activities in progressing the estate projects. Efforts now underway to progress the repairs to the SHI flat roof with a number of businesses approached to provide quotes.

Having agreed with the AF&GP members that a budget of £10,000 be available to address the tree works, attempts being made to complete this work.

Following receipt of the Small Market Towns Grant, picnic tables have been purchased and orders also being placed for more finger posts.

A comprehensive list of work to be undertaken across the remainder of the estate is being compiled.

20.047 **CIC/VISIT CHURCH STRETTON/CHURCHSTRETTON.CO.UK WEBSITE**

Cllr Welch advised Councillors that the new website was scheduled to be launched on 1st October. Councillors noted the previous agreement to provide a grant of £1,500 towards the launch and set-up of the new site. Cllr Welch also advised Councillors that £2,000 of the £5,000 given to the Town Council from the Small Market Towns Grant would be handed over to the CIC to cover the costs of creating new videos promoting the area.

Councillors expressed their thanks and appreciation for all the effort of Cllr Hickman in supporting both the Visitor Group website in addition to the Council's.

Councillors considered the possibility of promoting local groups but agreed that this best be placed on the new Visitor website and not the website of the Council.

20.048 **VISIT OF HIGH SHERIFF OF SHROPSHIRE**

Councillors noted the proposed schedule and timetable for the visit of the High Sheriff of Shropshire on 29th September. A review of the number of attendees was being undertaken to ensure appropriate social distancing.

20.049 **CHRISTMAS LIGHTS/PARTY ARRANGEMENTS**

Councillors noted that in view of the current pandemic situation, there be no formal Christmas Lights Switch On event nor a party. It was also noted that there would be no extension to the current light set-up.

Councillors further noted that some shopkeepers were willing to facilitate the collection tubs for contributions towards the lights. The Tree of Light which is partly funded by shopkeepers will be erected by The Rotary Club.

20.050 **UNITARY AND PARISH WARD ISSUES**

a) ***Report from Unitary Councillors***

Cllr Chapman advised Councillors of the appointment of Andy Begley as the new CEO of Shropshire Council.

Councillors were advised of the promotion of the DCMS gigabit voucher scheme to encourage the broadband extension. Two local applications have been seen.

The draft Local Plan has created interest within the community and mail has been received with concerns related to flooding.

New barriers have been installed in the High Street. It has been noted with disappointment that no action has been taken over white lining the revised parking arrangements. No date has been given for this to be done.

Councillors noted with concern instances of drivers using the High Street as a two-way rat run despite the current one-way set-up.

b) ***Parish Ward Issues***

The Indoor Leisure Services Consultation is ongoing with a closing date of 23rd October and feedback encouraged.

c) ***Road Closures/Works***

No update.

20.051 CORRESPONDENCE

Councillors noted the recent proposal by BT to remove the payphone at the foot of Sandford Avenue. Whilst it is acknowledged that the average use of 3 per month is low, it is considered important to have such a facility in the town given that the mobile signal is patchy in terms of the locality and also Carding Mill Valley.

RESOLVED (8 in favour, 2 opposed and 1 abstain) that Town Council respond to Shropshire Council making the case for the payphone to remain available.

Councillors noted the SALC survey on National Parking Consultation and agreed no response.

20.052 DATES OF FUTURE COUNCIL MEETINGS TO MARCH 2021

Proposed dates would be reviewed at the Executive Forum and shared with Councillors.

20.053 FORTHCOMING EVENTS

a) *Dates of next meetings:*

- i) Planning, Conservation and Heritage Committee: 13th October at 6m*
- ii) Economic Development Committee: 27th October at 7pm*
- iv) Council Meeting: 3rd November at 7pm*

These meetings taking place are subject to the guidance to be received from the Government and the National Association of Local Councils.

20.054 CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

Under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 S1(2), it is RESOLVED (unanimously) that in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, it is in the public interest that the public and press are excluded from these items.

a) Town Clerk Ill Health Retirement

Cllr Welch advised Councillors that he had hoped to hear further from the medical consultant in relation to the Clerk's condition but advice still awaited. On receipt of that advice and subject to timing, a special Council may be arranged to discuss retirement arrangements and process for recruitment of new Clerk.

b) Recruitment of New Clerk

Councillors considered the proposals of Cllr Welch in relation to the new Clerk grading. Councillors discussed whether prior understanding and agreement should be made in relation to staffing requirements; size and scale of Council responsibilities and impact on costs.

As a result of the meeting running to the full two hours Councillors considered suspension of the Standing Orders.

Proposed by Cllr Chapman, seconded by Cllr Braid and

RESOLVED (12 in favour, 1 abstain) to suspend Standing Orders and continue meeting to conclusion.

c) Staff Matters

Councillors noted the continued long-term absence of Ms Morris, Personal Assistant to the Clerk. Proposed by Cllr Welch, seconded by Cllr Morris and

RESOLVED (unanimously) to recruit temporary resource to support the Locum Clerk.

Councillors noted the departure of the ASO on 6th November.

Proposed by Cllr Hickman, seconded by Cllr Morris and

RESOLVED (unanimously) to recruit temporary resource to cover the Amenities responsibilities.

d) 2020/2021 National Salary Award

Councillors noted the announcement by the National Association of Local Councils of the annual pay award which is backdated to 1st April. Increase amounts to approximately 2.5%.

Councillors noted the amounts involved.

Proposed by Cllr Welch, seconded by Cllr Antill and

RESOLVED (unanimously) to award the increment as set out by the National Association of Local Councils.

Councillors considered the arrangements in relation to the provision of Spinal Point Increases and its applicability to the Council's staff. Councillors noted this applied to the Town Clerk and Deputy Clerk/RFO.

Councillors noted that employee contracts would need to reviewed and budgetary considerations factored in.

Proposed by Cllr Hickman, seconded by Cllr Carson and

RESOLVED (7 in favour, 4 opposed, 2 abstain) to implement the Spinal Point increase to the Town Clerk and the Deputy Clerk/RFO.

9.25 pm

DRAFT