

Church Stretton Town Council

MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD VIA ZOOM REMOTE MEETING PLATFORM ON TUESDAY 3rd NOVEMBER 2020 at 7.00 p.m.

Those present: *Councillors:* Cllr L Antill, Cllr S Baker, 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) (joined part through meeting), Mr. M. Turner (Amenities and Services Officer), Miss R Gwilliam (Amenities Officer), Mrs H Merrett (Admin Officer)
Unitary Councillors:
Members of the Public: 2

20.055 **WELCOME**

The Chairman welcomed Councillors and members of the public to the meeting.

20.056 **TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES**

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

20.057 **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**

20.058 **QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

None received.

20.059 **POLICE MATTERS**

Sergeant Damien Kelly advised the past couple of months had been busy with a number of thefts reported in the area. 6 crimes were reported in September and 14 in October. Two arrests made to date with one currently with the Crown Prosecution Service for a decision on whether to proceed with charge. Plain clothes operations also undertaken and no burglaries reported since 24 October. With regard to the upcoming lockdown, no advice to offer, but identified breaches will be dealt with and Police presence will be more visible.

On advice from the ASO of low level anti-social behaviour in the Park, Sergeant Kelly advised that he would follow up on this.

On advice of the faulty road lights at Marshbrook and calls not being taken on the 101 line, Sergeant Kelly advised that there are resource issues at the call centre, but for such matters, these should be referred to the Highways department.

The Chairman thanked Sergeant Kelly for his update who gave his apologies and left the meeting at 7:17pm.

20.060 **TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES taken at the Town Council Meeting held on 22nd September 2020**

The Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 22nd September 2020 had been circulated.

Proposed by Cllr Luff, seconded by Cllr Carson and

RESOLVED (unanimously) to confirm and adopt the Minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 22nd September 2020 as correct, and these were duly signed by the Chairman as a true record.
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20.061 **FINANCIAL MATTERS**

a) **Project Spending Imperatives for 2021/2022**

In the absence of the RFO, the Locum Clerk advised Councillors that, to date, no advices had been

received in relation to projects or spending items for the next financial year. Councillors were requested to advise of any that came to mind as soon as practical in order that these can be factored into the upcoming budget preparations.

b) **Precept Scenario Requirements for 2021/2022**

The Locum Clerk advised Councillors that in order to avoid a repeat of the late discussions over the Precept calculations held in January 2020, Councillors were required to consider the level of Precept that may be required for the next financial year. Councillors had received a paper setting out the scenarios based on a number of calculations based on no change to the current year or increases and decreases up to 2%. Cllr Chapman noted that there may be an increase in the Precept amount as a result of more properties coming on stream.

Consideration of the Precept scenarios would be factored into the upcoming budget discussions but Councillors shared the view that there should be no change to the amount.

c) **VAT Review**

The Locum Clerk advised Councillors that the final calculations were expected shortly and progress should be made on closing the issues out.

20.062 **PROJECT PRIORITIES NOVEMBER 2020 TO MARCH 2021**

The Locum Clerk advised Councillors the focus on projects for the remainder of the financial year was on addressing the points raised within the internal auditor's report. There are resource constraints on delivering these and close management is required to ensure that these projects are delivered.

The Locum Clerk advised Councillors that further work is required to ensure that all aspects of the Council affairs are brought up to date.

Cllr Walker noted that a number of projects involved contractors who are not local to the area. The ASO advised that this is not due to a lack of effort to encourage them to quote, but attempts to engage local businesses have met with little response. There is a desire to maintain a list of preferred contractors. The current list held needs updating.

20.063 **CHARITIES CONSOLIDATION**

The RFO advised Councillors of recent developments and progress undertaken by the Solicitor in the consolidation of Richard Robinson Field and Russell's Meadow into the Brooksbury Charity. There was a clear perception that residents already considered these assets to be within Brooksbury. To undertake the merger, a public notice would require to be published and the Solicitor had provided relevant details.

Councillors discussed the merits of continuing with the process and noted that the proposed consolidation was to enable ease of administration and greater transparency.

Proposed by Cllr Hickman, seconded by Cllr Claytonsmith and

RESOLVED (unanimously) that the consolidation of Richard Robinson Field and Russell's Meadow into Brooksbury Charity be continued.

20.064 **AMENITIES REPORT**

a) **Defibrillator**

The box to contain the Defibrillator has been delivered and arrangements are in hand for it to be installed at the Pavilion.

b) **Volunteering**

Councillors noted that the planned re-introduction of volunteers had been postponed in light of the second lockdown. Councillors discussed the merits of re-introduction once lockdown is lifted.

Proposed by Cllr Welch, seconded by Cllr Carter and

RESOLVED (10 in favour, 1 abstain, 1 oppose) that volunteering activities be re-introduced following the end of lockdown.

c) **Market**

Meeting has been held with Franchise Holder and Cllrs Baker and Carson to review operations in

light of the current constraints. These have been followed up in writing and the Police have been requested to attend to check on compliance.

d) Tree Survey and Surgery Co-ordination

Councillors noted that, to date, tree surveys for Rectory Wood and Field have been undertaken separately from the remainder of the Council's estate. In light of the arrangements established with the Country Parks and Heritage Sites Manager (South) at Shropshire Council, the opportunity to coordinate the surveys has arisen to consolidate the separate checks. A fresh estate wide survey is due to be undertaken and it is considered best practice to utilise the skilled resources within Shropshire Council for the sourcing of quotes for surveys and surgery work subsequently identified.

Proposed by Cllr Welch, seconded by Cllr Carter and

RESOLVED (11 in favour, 1 abstain) that the Council outsources the administration of the quote sourcing for surveys and surgery work to the Country Parks and Heritage Sites Manager (South) at Shropshire Council.

e) Coppice Leasowes Maintenance Contract with Shropshire Council

Councillors noted the current maintenance contract with Shropshire Council was for a one-year term only. Councillors were advised that to improve efficiency in managing the contracts and budgets, aligning this arrangement with the contract held for Rectory Wood and Field would be appropriate, enabling future reviews to be conducted at the same time. To enable this, a contract extension for two years is considered most appropriate.

Proposed by Cllr Welch, seconded by Cllr Walker and

RESOLVED (11 in favour, 1 abstain) that the contract with Shropshire Council be extended for a further two-year period to facilitate a joint future review with Rectory Wood and Field.

f) Play Equipment Checks

Councillors noted that the Outdoor Team currently undertake the checks of the play equipment. Councillors considered the merits of outsourcing this activity to an independent contractor, albeit, at a potential annual cost of £2,500. Councillors agreed that further consideration be given to this before a proposal is made.

Proposed by Cllr Chapman, seconded by Cllr Wilks and

RESOLVED (unanimously) that a formal business case be made to outsource this activity and to factor in the merits of sufficient Council resource to undertake these tasks.

g) Sensory Garden

Councillors noted the public concerns being expressed over the state of Sensory Garden and that access to it had been prevented in view of its current condition. Options for the site were considered. It was noted that reinstatement costs could total £15,000.

The ASO advised Councillors that seeking quotes for the work had been challenging and to date one quote had been obtained with a timescale for implementation of the work in Spring 2021.

Councillors noted the previous public engagement and participation in maintenance which has been seen to fall away leaving the Council to manage this asset. Future work should allow for public support and re-engagement.

Proposed by Cllr Welch, seconded by Cllr Carter and

RESOLVED (unanimously) that the Council promote public engagement with the maintenance of Sensory Garden and that the Council proceed to take steps to refurbish the site.

h) Station Patch Bridge

Councillors noted the efforts to be made to implement repairs.

i) Shropshire Market Towns Fund

Councillors noted the purchases of picnic tables for Rectory Field and that additional finger posts are being ordered.

j) Silvester Horne Institute

Councillors noted that quotes for the repair of the flat roof have been received. Further checks are

being made as there may be concerns over the condition of the whole roof.

The ASO advised that a decibel monitor has been purchased to monitor sound and noise levels following receipt of further complaints from owner at adjoining property.

The ASO advised Councillors that the neighbour of the adjoining property had approached the Council enquiring on the possibility of shortening the width of the wall at his driveway. This has been proposed to enable the owner to ease access to the property and decrease the delays caused to other drivers whilst manoeuvring.

Councillors maintained the view that the wall was integral to the design of the building and that there was sufficient space within the drive.

Proposed by Cllr Claytonsmith, seconded by Cllr Walker and

RESOLVED (unanimously) that no action be taken in relation to the wall.

Councillors noted the concerns over understanding and ensuring compliance with Landlord responsibilities for the cottage. Cllr Chapman advised of membership of the National Landlords Association and details would be forwarded to the RFO who will assume the role of monitoring these responsibilities.

k) Rough Sleeping and Tents in Rectory Wood

Councillors noted the recent activity and that the team are taking appropriate action.

20.065 INDOOR LEISURE SERVICES CONSULTATION

Cllr Welch advised Councillors that the Town Council had responded to the Consultation with the appropriate emphasis on the positive steps to invest in the Leisure Centre.

20.066 SKATEPARK COMMUNITY INITIATIVE

Councillors noted the recent events surrounding the skatepark group's construction efforts. It was noted that this has been impacted by the decision by Shropshire Council to refer to their Legal team to advise whether planning permission is required.

Councillors noted that arrangements will be made to put a contract in place between the group and the Town Council to ensure clarity on responsibilities.

Councillors noted the previous discussions held and the approval given to the group to proceed with the installation.

Proposed by Cllr Welch, seconded by Cllr Morris and

RESOLVED (unanimously by Cllrs Antill, Baker, Carson, Carter, Chapman, Claytonsmith, Hickman, Luff, Morris, Walker, Welch and Wilks) that the Council ratifies the decision made on 8th October 2020 to approve the installation of the skatepark within the Park.

20.067 COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

Councillors noted and appreciated the efforts undertaken by Cllr Hickman to maintain the websites for the Town Council and Visit Church Stretton. It was noted that responsibility for the Visit Church Stretton site has now moved to a new group.

It is recognised that a review of the Council's communications is required and Councillors noted the proposal that a group be formed to oversee and implement the review.

Cllrs Antill, Chapman, Hickman and Morris offered themselves to establish the group which was agreed by Councillors with Cllr Hickman assuming the role of group chairman.

Proposed by Cllr Hickman, seconded by Cllr Antill and

RESOLVED (unanimously) that a Task Group be established to ensure compliance with On-Line Statute and Regulations by March 2021 and develop a Communications Strategy to be bequeathed to the incoming Town Council in May 2021.

20.068 TOWN PARK TASK GROUP TERMS OF REFERENCE

Councillors noted proposal to form a Town Park Task Group and reviewed the draft Terms of Reference. Group being established to identify opportunities to increase the opportunities for usage by residents and visitors. Membership of this group is noted as Cllrs Carter, Luff, Walker and Welch with the chair to be appointed at the group's first meeting scheduled for 27th November.

20.069 **UNITARY AND PARISH WARD ISSUES**

a) **Report from Unitary Councillors**

Cllr Chapman advised Councillors of the appointment of latest developments in the number of COVID cases within the county. Advice and support continues to be provided by Shropshire Council via telephone lines and website. Impact on mental health is appreciated, especially on support staff.

Cllr Chapman advised that he is also involved with the group that is looking at and seeking to address flooding issues across the county.

In terms of the changes to the High Street, no progress could be reported but efforts continue to have these addressed.

b) **Parish Ward Issues**

Cllr Hickman advised of concerns over the lack of feedback coming out of the meetings on Carding Mill Valley. Cllr Welch advised that he maintains contact with the Chair of All Stretton Village Society and raises their questions and feeds back on responses and progress.

c) **Road Closures/Works**

No update.

20.070 **CORRESPONDENCE**

None.

20.071 **FORTHCOMING EVENTS**

a) **Dates of next meetings:**

i) *Amenities, Finance & General Purposes Committee: 10th November at 7pm*

ii) *Planning, Conservation and Heritage Committee: 17th November at 7m*

iii) *Economic Development Committee: 1st December at 7pm*

iv) *Council Meeting: 8th December at 7pm*

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

The Locum Clerk will issue a list of the meetings and their dates through to end March 2021.

The Chairman declared the Public meeting ended at 8.55pm.

20.072 **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) **Staff Matters**

Councillors considered the paper submitted by Cllr Welch and his proposal that the extraordinary efforts of members of the team throughout the year be recognised.

Proposed by Cllr Welch, seconded by Cllr Claytonsmith and

RESOLVED (unanimously) to award the proposed ex-gratia payments.

b) **Staff Salary Grading Comparison to Other Councils**

Cllr Welch presented to Councillors a paper establishing the need to review the Council's grading and remuneration for its employees. This had become necessary following events in the change of resources throughout the year. Whilst it was recognised that the positions of all members of the team require review, the position relating to the Town Clerk was more pressing.

Councillors exchanged a range of views and considered options. Following extensive discussion, it was agreed that further consideration of the Council's requirements was required and the topic be deferred to a future meeting.