

Church Stretton Town Council

MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD VIA ZOOM REMOTE MEETING PLATFORM ON TUESDAY 19th JANUARY 2021 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.
Officers: Mr. C. Maclean (Locum Town Clerk), Miss R Gwilliam (Amenities Officer), Mrs H Merrett (Admin Officer)
Unitary Councillors: Cllr L Chapman
Members of the Public: 1

20.091 **WELCOME**

The Chairman welcomed Councillors to the meeting.

20.092 **TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received and accepted from Mr. D. Chetwood (Town Clerk), Miss B. Clarke (Responsible Financial Officer), Cllr D Wilks.

20.093 **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**

20.094 **QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

None received.

20.095 **TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES taken at the Town Council Meeting held on 8th December 2020**

The Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 8th December 2020 had been circulated.
Proposed by Cllr Braid, seconded by Cllr Carson and

RESOLVED (unanimously) to confirm and adopt the Minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 8th December 2020 as correct, and these were duly signed by the Chairman as a true record.

20.096 **TOWN COUNCIL RESPONSE TO LEVEL 5 PANDEMIC RESTRICTIONS**

Councillors noted the report and the responses by the Council and community to the Level 5 pandemic restrictions. Councillors discussed the concerns being expressed from the community over the mixed messages at national and local level over the rollout of the vaccination programme. Councillors noted the concerns over the inadequacy of wearing of face masks in the Thursday market on the Square and this would be taken up with the market franchise holder. There was concern from a number of residents about the number of visitors to the area and the impact on parking in Churchill Road. The Council decision at the last council meeting will be kept under review and revisited in six months. Proposed by Cllr Carson, seconded by Cllr Antill and

RESOLVED, (11 in favour, 1 against) that the Council responds to the members of the public noting their concerns and advising of the six-month review.

20.097 **REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES/WORKING GROUPS/COUNCILLORS**

a) **Planning, Heritage and Conservation Committee**

The minutes of the Planning, Heritage and Conservation Committee meeting held on 15th December 2020 had already been circulated. Proposed by Cllr Morris, seconded by Cllr Hickman and

RESOLVED (unanimously) to receive the Minutes of the Planning, Heritage and Conservation Committee Meeting held on 15th December 2020 and to confirm and accept the resolutions and recommendations contained therein.

b) **Amenities, Finance and General Purposes Committee**

The minutes of the Amenities, Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on 5th January 2021 had already been circulated. Proposed by Cllr Carson, seconded by Cllr Carter and

RESOLVED (unanimously) to receive the Minutes of the Amenities, Finance and General Purposes Committee Meeting held on 5th January 2021 and to confirm and accept the resolutions and recommendations contained therein.

20.098 **FINANCIAL MATTERS**

a) **Financial Accounts**

The Locum Town Clerk advised Councillors of the sums held on the Council's bank accounts and projected expenditure to the end of the current financial year.

b) **Council Budget for 2021-22**

Cllrs had resolved at the previous Council Meeting that the precept should be maintained at the same level as the current financial year. The Locum Town Clerk noted that the deadline for the submission of the Precept request to Shropshire Council was approaching.

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

RESOLVED (unanimously) to submit the Precept request to Shropshire Council for the same amount as the current financial year.

c) **Treatment of Charities Expenditure and VAT Implications**

Councillors noted the VAT implications on the Council and Charities if expenditure was met by the Council. Whilst the utility bills are invoiced to the Charities and therefore require to be met by the individual Charities, all other expenditure could be met by the Council allowing the Council to reclaim the VAT where appropriate. Staff costs would also be met by the Council to remove the need to add VAT, mitigating increased costs to the Charities concerned. This arrangement would also allow the Council to lower the amount of grant subsidies required for the Charities.

Proposed by Cllr Hickman, seconded by Cllr Luff and

RESOLVED (unanimously) to authorise the Responsible Financial Officer to process utility invoices direct to the Charities and enable the Council to pay staff costs and invoices where VAT was required and could be reclaimed.

d) **VAT Review Update**

The Locum Town Clerk advised Councillors that the RFO planned to submit a paper to the next Council meeting.

The Locum Town Clerk advised Councillors that in light of the numerous VAT related issues and enquiries it was appropriate to engage a consultant to provide advice and support similar to the arrangements already in place for IT. Initial discussions with the current VAT consultants assisting the Council suggested that a suitable arrangement could be put in place at an estimated cost of between £500 and £1,000 per annum.

Proposed Cllr Braid, seconded Cllr Hickman and

RESOLVED (unanimously) to approach our current VAT consultants to determine whether they would be agreeable to provide an advice and support service with a monthly retainer fee.

e) **AGAR Challenge**

The Locum Town Clerk advised Councillors that a challenge had been raised against the Council and its AGAR submission for the last financial year to the external auditors. Reviews were ongoing and

whilst it was not known how long this would take the Council was on notice that the external auditor costs to complete this would require to be met by the Council.

20.099 CONSOLIDATION OF RUSSELLS MEADOW INTO BROOKSBURY RECREATION GROUND CHARITY UPDATE

Councillors noted that the consolidation was still ongoing and that it was considered appropriate to fully understand the VAT implications surrounding the Pavilion before proceeding further.

20.100 AMENITIES REPORT

a) Rectory Wood and Coppice Leasowes

The willow trees to be felled are on the boundary with the railway line and the Council had been advised this work could not be undertaken whilst the line is open. Negotiations are ongoing with Network Rail to determine the arrangements and costs. Further details to be submitted to Council once these are obtained.

b) SHI Cottage

Progress on the repairs is being slowed due to the current lockdown. Efforts to deal with the guttering will be progressed. Cllr Baker enquired whether a dehumidifier had been installed in the property but it was noted that this was yet to be progressed and agreement would be required with the tenant on the extra costs that would be incurred whilst it was operating.

c) SHI Flat Roof

Progress on the repairs is being delayed due to the current cold weather. These would progress as soon as temperatures permitted.

d) SHI Drains

Councillors noted the attempts to deal with the drainage issues. Further details would be submitted to Council once a solution and associated costs had been identified.

e) Play Equipment

Councillors noted that inspections of the play areas and their equipment had been undertaken. It was also noted that replacement of one of the swings in the Town Park was required. A meeting had also been held with the Outdoor Team to identify priorities in terms of repairs and improvements. The Locum Town Clerk advised Councillors that he planned to approach the members of the All Stretton Village Society to discuss the best approach to deal with the improvements required for the play area in All Stretton. It had been noted that trees and hedges surrounding the play area at All Stretton had become overgrown and required attention.

20.101 CHRISTMAS LIGHTS TASK GROUP

Councillors noted the proposed establishment of a task group to focus on the improvements to the Christmas lights and arrangements for the next Christmas events. Councillors agreed that the task group should collect ideas from the community and the town's traders to ensure wide engagement. Councillors noted that most of the collecting boxes for last Christmas had been recovered. Councillors discussed the proposed terms of reference for the task group and agreed that the group should establish requirements with the Council team undertaking the subsequent procurement process.

Proposed by Cllr Welch, seconded by Cllr Chapman and

<p>RESOLVED (10 in favour, 2 abstain) that the proposed Terms of Reference of the Christmas Lights Task Group with items a) and b) removed and item h) amended from "March" to "ASAP" be approved.</p>

20.102 UNITARY AND PARISH WARD MATTERS

a) Report from Unitary Councillors

Cllr Chapman advised Councillors that the tax base for Shropshire has been set and the Treasury strategy has also been published.

A climate plan and strategy for Shropshire has also been drafted. The Council Economic Recovery and Resilience Framework has also been published which should assist recovery from the Covid

pandemic.

The Housing Strategy has also been approved.

A meeting had recently been held with local authorities to address the issues relating to the campsite at Dirty Lane in All Stretton.

Councillors also noted the recent COVID infection rates.

b) Parish Ward Issues

Councillors noted that the Place Plan is out of date and efforts are to be undertaken to have this updated by the Executive Forum for future discussion at Council. Delays in agreeing this with the officer responsible at Shropshire Council were noted due to her secondment to assist in the support and recovery efforts being provided by Shropshire Council

Councillors noted that proposals had been put forward regarding pavement widening and one-way traffic arrangements, ideally to have been tried out on an emergency basis during the lockdown.

c) Road Closures/Works

None noted

20.103 CORRESPONDENCE

The Census is due to take place as at 21st March 2021 and the Locum Town Clerk will distribute promotional paperwork.

Town Council elections are due on 6th May 2021 but this date is still under review.

20.104 FORTHCOMING EVENTS

i. Amenities, Finance & General Purposes Committee: 2nd February 2021 at 7pm

ii. Planning, Conservation and Heritage Committee: 9th February 2021 at 7pm

iii. Council Meeting: 16th February 2021 at 7pm

iv. Economic Development Committee: 23rd February 2021 at 7pm

The Chairman declared the Public meeting ended at 8.47pm.

20.105 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 Retirement

Councillors noted the current situation regarding the Town Clerk and the findings of the medical practitioner employed by the Council with regard to his ability to continue in a role with the Town Council.

Proposed by Cllr Welch, seconded by Cllr Luff and

RESOLVED (unanimously) to terminate the Town Clerk's employment with the Council.

Councillors noted the proposed pension tier recommendation provided by the medical practitioner.

Proposed by Cllr Walker, seconded by Cllr Hickman and

RESOLVED (unanimously) to transfer the Town Clerk to Tier 1 level within the Local Government Pension Scheme.

Councillors noted the requirement to complete documentation for the process to be completed.

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

RESOLVED (unanimously) to delegate the responsibility for the review, oversight and execution of the required documentation to be delivered to the Local Government Pension Scheme to the Executive Forum in conjunction with the Locum Town Clerk.

b) Re-grading of Town Clerk Salary

Councillors considered the proposals in relation to the regrading of the Town Clerk's position and the increased responsibilities.

Proposed by Cllr Chapman, seconded by Cllr Luff and

RESOLVED (10 in favour, 1 abstain) to approve the regrading of the Town Clerk role from SCP 28-33 to SCP 35-38.

c) ***Locum Town Clerk Hours April to December 2020***

Councillors noted the paper presented to reflect the hours provided by the Locum Town Clerk from April to December 2020.

Proposed by Cllr Welch, seconded by Cllr Walker and

RESOLVED (unanimously) to note the hours provided and paid for and the arrangements continue until the situation regarding the Town Clerk has been resolved and the new Town Clerk is in post or as otherwise agreed between the Town Council and the Locum Town Clerk.

d) ***Town Clerk Personal Assistant***

The Locum Town Clerk updated Councillors on the health of the Personal Assistant.

Meeting ended at 9.10pm.