

Whitchurch Town Council

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FULL COUNCIL MEETING

MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 19th DECEMBER 2019

PRESENT

Cllrs: B. Duffy, A. Chesters, A. Hall, S. Hamlyn, T. Neville, T. O'Neill, S. Radford, J. Sinnott, R. Snell and H. Vasey.

IN ATTENDANCE

Zoë Dean – Town Centre Manager/Assistant Town Clerk
Harry Wright – Reporter, Whitchurch Herald
Charlotte Bentley – Reporter, Shropshire Star

In line with the Council's Meeting Recording Policy, the Chairman asked if anyone was recording the meeting, Cllr Hall stated that he was recording the meeting.

1. Apologies

Cllr Lee Broders – work commitment
Cllr John Martin – family commitment
Cllr Ruth Shepherd – travel & work commitment

2. Declarations of Interest

None received.

3. Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor of Whitchurch wished all a Merry Christmas & a Happy New year and thanked the staff for their hard work.

The Mayor has represented the Town Council on the following occasions:

29th November - St John's Church Christmas lights switch on
30th November - Whitchurch Christmas lights switch on event
7th December - WHAG Book signing at Bookshop.
14th December - Veterans' Breakfast at the Bull's Head
15th December - St Alkmund's Carol service

The Mayor stated that she would be hosting a coffee morning on Friday 20th December in aid of Whitchurch Scouting & Guiding Association and Headway.

The Council offices will close on Friday 20th December and reopen on Thursday 2nd January 2020. The Civic Centre will be open the weekend prior to Christmas due to bookings. The Christmas Pantomime is running from 26th – 29th December 2019 when the building will be operating partial opening hours for these performances.

The Mayor of Whitchurch then made the following statements:

"I would like to draw Council's attention to the Council's Communications Protocol which states that: the Town Clerk will clear all press reports on behalf of the Council, or comments to the media, in consultation with the Mayor, or the Chairman of the relevant committee

when appropriate. A councillor voicing their own opinions, clearly speaking as a councillor on Council matters has again approached the press directly. I am reminding councillors that this is not the correct procedure to follow.

Now for some good news...

Following an informal meeting which took place on this week with Professor Mark Barrow, Director of Place at Shropshire Council, I am very pleased to be able to tell you that Prof Barrow has confirmed the actions that he will be taking as an outcome of the meeting:

Civic Centre: Prof Barrow stated: I can confirm that we are now at the point of being able to complete the Community Asset Transfer (CAT) of the (Civic Centre) building to the Town Council within the next month, hopefully by the end of January.

Centre North East: Prof Barrow said he would contact his colleagues in the estates team to address the leaking roof in the short term and will be progressing the Community Asset Transfer to Whitchurch Town Council.

The next items were raised by Prof. Barrow himself:

Jubilee Park car park on Sherry Mill Hill: very happy to explore transferring this car park to the Town Council under a Community Asset Transfer if the Council so wish.

The Former Gasworks was also raised but as this is pertinent to Agenda Item 14 I will refer to it there.

Prof Barrow wish to everyone at the Town Council very best wishes for Christmas and the New Year.

More detail will follow for councillors."

4. Minutes

After a proposal from Cllr Hamlyn, seconded by Cllr Neville

It was **WTC/130/1920 RESOLVED** to accept the minutes of the Council meeting held on **Thursday 21st November 2019** and sign as an accurate record of that meeting.

All in favour.

5. Council Resolution Record

The Chairman noted that the staff were working on this document and wished defer it until January.

6. Public Participation

After a proposal from Cllr Hamlyn, seconded by Cllr Neville,

It was **WTC/131/1920 RESOLVED** to suspend Standing Orders for the purpose of Public Participation.

Mr G. Crowther-Smith representing Men in Sheds. Mr Crowther-Smith asked whether the Town Council was committed to Centre North East, noting that money had been pledged by a resident and stating that the group were happy to use the updated 'derelict' room to allow space for other groups.

Claire Shaffer wished to reiterate Mr Crowther-Smith's comments and provide a voice for the Youth, stating that there was more support for older people in town and less for the youth. Ms Shaffer asked for this item to be expediated as the town youth is valued. Perhaps Crowd Funding could be help to fund the project.

7. Update from Local Policing Team

A Police Officer was unable to make the meeting but the report was read out by the Mayor. The Police asked all to remain vigilant following a recent bought of cash scams and to protect elderly residents.

8. Shropshire Councillor's Report

Cllr Gerald Dakin noted that at a recent meeting Shropshire Council had agreed to be Carbon Neutral by 2030 and a working party would be formed. A county-wide streetlight replacement programme had been established for the next three years. It is hoped that consumption would be reduced by 56%. Cllr Dakin to leave a copy of the report in the Town Council office.

Cllr Hall asked Cllr Dakin how the current £14 million deficit can be reduced. Cllr Dakin responded, stating it was hoped that the debt would be reduced to £5 million, paying it off through services.

After a proposal from Cllr Neville, seconded by Cllr O'Neill,
It was **WTC/132/1920 RESOLVED** to reinstate Standing Orders.

9. Accounts

After a proposal from Cllr Chesters, seconded by Cllr Hamlyn,
It was **WTC/133/1920 RESOLVED** to accept the Month 8 accounts.

10. Minutes from Committees

- a. After a proposal from Cllr Vasey, seconded by Cllr Neville,
It was **WTC/134/1920 RESOLVED** to accept the minutes of the Cultural & Civic Centre Committee meeting held on 3rd October 2019. Cllr Hall abstained.
- b. After a proposal from Cllr Vasey, seconded by Cllr Neville,
It was **WTC/135/1920 RESOLVED** to amend the minutes from the Cultural & Civic Centre Committee held on 7th November 2019, item 16. "Sound" was replaced with "lighting".
After a proposal from Cllr Vasey, seconded by Cllr Hamlyn,
It was **WTC/136/1920 RESOLVED** to accept the amended minutes. Cllr Hall abstained.
- c. After a proposal from Cllr Chesters, seconded by Cllr Hamlyn,
It was **WTC/137/1920 RESOLVED** to accept the minutes from the Finance Committee meeting held on 14th November 2019.
- d. Personnel Minutes 15th November 2019, an incorrect draft had been circulated, check LTN reference. It was noted that this committee could not agree a staff pay award policy and this would need to be revisited at the next Personnel meeting. The approval of the minutes was deferred until the next Full Council meeting.

11. Correspondence

Letter received from Harley Gallimore Johnson relating to use of plastics.
Council requested that a letter be sent back to Master Gallimore Johnson, endorsing his thoughts, pointing out that there is a Whitchurch Against Plastic Group.

12. Whitchurch Relief in Need Charity

After a proposal from Cllr Hall, seconded by Cllr Vasey,
It was **WTC/138/1920 RESOLVED** to invite Mr John Stokes to continue in his role.

13. Reports from Councillors on Outside Bodies

Cllr Hall attended both the monthly meeting of Chamber of Trade at Hill Valley on 27th November as well as the special BID meeting on 9th December, where Mo from the Mosaic Partnership conducted a presentation for businesses.

14. Motion 20 – Cllr John Sinnott

Cllr Sinnott introduced the motion, it was seconded by Cllr Hall and the item was brought forward for debate. Cllr Sinnott noted that there had been very little progress at the site and the trees were now very overgrown and the white lines could no longer be seen. Cllr Sinnott urged the Town Council to make a considered choice which was why the issue was raised. The Former Gasworks Site at Sherrymill Hill was then debated by members.

Following a debate, Cllr Sinnott amended the motion, which was seconded by Cllr O'Neill: It was **WTC/139/1920 RESOLVED** that Whitchurch Town Council work with Shropshire Council with a view to the acquisition of the land by the end of 2020.
All in favour.

15. Temporary Removal of Grant Scheme for One Year

Cllr Chesters introduced this item as part of the budget review in order to save money for a twelve-month period, as a recommendation from the Finance Committee. Cllr Chesters reiterated that savings needed to be made and the suggestion had not been taken lightly. Cllr Hamlyn advised that it was common practice to suspend a funding source in order to gain breathing space.

After a proposal from Cllr Chesters, seconded by Cllr Hamlyn,

It was **WTC/140/1920 RESOLVED** to suspend the Town Council grant scheme for one year.

16. Budget 2020/2021

The Chairman of Finance noted that the figures received from Shropshire Council were still approximate but there would be no great increase from last year. The current budget was sitting at a 20% increase which was too expensive for residents, with the biggest contributing factor being increases for pension scheme.

Members debated options.

Cllr Chesters made a suggestion to take some money from general reserves in the short term then look at ways of saving/making more income over the next 12 months.

After a proposal from Cllr Chesters, seconded by Cllr Hamlyn,

It was **WTC/141/1920 RESOLVED** to accept the budget, taking £30,000 out of general reserves and £30,000 out of the Harry Richards Fund.

All in favour.

17. Centre North East

Cllr Vasey noted that the work needs to progress quickly.

After a proposal by Cllr Vasey, seconded by Cllr O'Neill,

It was **WTC/142/1920 RESOLVED** that working group should expediate work and business plan as soon as possible, appointing Cllrs Vasey, O'Neill, Hamlyn, Hall and Duffy to the working group, with a caveat to invite interested parties/groups to the meeting.

18. Stage Area Testing

The Acting Town Clerk gave an update on the progress of the remedial stage work which was all going well and on track to be finished tomorrow. The new lighting bar is up, and all of the new ropes have been installed which are now all rated. Every fixing has been checked, everything had been realigned and a safe working load has been established. Once the work had been completed the company will submit a report to Council, but the stage is safe for the pantomime. Council may wish to consider further work in the future as things start to wear out. The final project had come in at £3,000 under budget.

19. Confidential

After a proposal by Cllr Duffy, seconded by Cllr Neville it was **WTC/1/1920 RESOLVED** that under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and press be excluded for the remainder of the meeting because of the likely disclosure of private and confidential information or staff matters.

All recordings were ceased.

20. Staffing Matters

The Mayor gave an update on the Town Clerk's absence.

The Mayor then proceeded to give a verbal report.

Meeting closed at 8.33pm

Chairman

Date