

Whitchurch Town Council

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FULL COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 21st SEPTEMBER 2017

PRESENT

Cllrs: A. Chesters, B. Duffy, J. Martin, J. McAuley, T. O'Neill, A. Hall and L. Broders

IN ATTENDANCE

Gerald Dakin – Shropshire Council
John Campion – Police Crime Commissioner (PCC)
Inspector Ian Wall – PCC Staff Officer
Nicola Young – Town Clerk
Barrie White – Whitchurch Herald

1. Apologies

Cllr T. Neville – illness
Cllr J. Sinnott - illness

2. Declarations of Interest

None received.

3. Minutes

After a proposal from Cllr Broders, seconded by Cllr Hall, it was **WTC/47/1718 RESOLVED** to accept the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on the **21st September 2017** and sign as an accurate record of that meeting.

4. Matters Arising

No matters arising

5. Mayor's Announcements

No announcements from the Mayor as he was unable to attend.

6. Public Participation

After a proposal from Cllr Duffy, seconded by Cllr O'Neill it was **WTC/48/1718 RESOLVED** that Public Participation would take place after the presentations.

7. Presentation from Whitchurch Herald Editor

A presentation from Mr Colin Channon was received on a proposed Community Awards Scheme. Mr Channon informed Council of the past success of an Awards Scheme in Oswestry and how North West Media had worked with Oswestry Town Council. Mr Channon suggested a contribution of £750 from Whitchurch Town Council. After a proposal from Cllr Duffy, seconded by Cllr Hall, it was **WTC/49/1718 RESOLVED** to contribute £750 towards a Community Awards Scheme in Whitchurch and that the Clerk should work with Mr Channon on the project.

8. Presentation from Police Crime Commissioner

A presentation was received from Mr John Campion, Police Crime Commissioner (PCC). Mr Campion first talked about the role of the PCC:

- a. The PCC is the elected representative acting on the electorate's behalf working with West Mercia Police. West Mercia Police have £212million to pay for resources, including:
 - i. Property
 - ii. Vehicles
 - iii. Equipment
- b. Provide a Police & Crime Plan – Safer West Mercia Plan
- c. The PCC has a duty to ensure the Police service is effectively led and works closely with Chief Constable Anthony Bangham.
- d. Plan:
 - i. Putting victims first.
 - ii. Secure West Midlands – to have enough Police fighting crime – armed/terrorist/tazers, etc.
 - iii. Reforming West Mercia Police – improve technology so that Police have the right tools for the job.
 - iv. Public confidence in Police response / citizen service – this is a low crime part of the country
 - v. West Mercia Police have 2,000 officers

Whitchurch Town Council Questions & PCC Response

- Q. An often-repeated mantra from the Police Service is 'intelligence led policing'. Much Police intelligence is gleaned from the local populace by observation and conversation, however, in Whitchurch we rarely see foot patrols by either officers or PCSOs engaging in conversation. So, how can West Mercia Police gain the required intelligence to assist in crime detection?
- A. It is difficult for the Police to make it known that they are visible.
- Q. There is a lack of Police presence on the streets of the town, what are the policing priorities in relation to areas such as Whitchurch and its surrounds which are perceived to be low crime areas but suffer, among other crimes, a considerable amount of ASB, thefts from farms and drug related crime?
- A. One priority for the PCC is investment in Safer Neighbourhood Teams, so that they can work with the community. The community can support the Police, ie, in Shrewsbury there are Street Pastors.
- Q. Fear of crime by the local community is and can be reduced by seeing the Police on foot patrols, but as Whitchurch people do not see the Police regularly enough, Whitchurch Town Council are worried that vigilante groups or reprisals will take place. What is the Police Crime Commissioner's view?
- A. There is no place in society for vigilantism, please report all incidents to 101 or 999 if an emergency.
- Q. Due to the lack of Police presence on the streets of Whitchurch, crime reporting has reduced as there is a "if I report it there's no Police anyway so nothing will be done" attitude that has arisen amongst residents. How will the local policing teams turn this attitude around?
- A. West Mercia Police have finite resources, it is a large area and a higher density of officers are employed to some areas, there is a low presence locally as Whitchurch is considered to be a safer community.

- Q. Is it West Mercia Police policy simply to issue a crime number and to not investigate crimes, eg, burglary, where the victim of the crime could claim off their insurance to replace their loss? If this is the case (as is local perception) is this not an open invitation to criminals to operate with impunity? How can the police dispel this perception?
- A. The Police have a policy on what people can expect when they report a burglary.
- Q. Anti-social behaviour and low crime incidents have become prolific within the last 4-6 months in Whitchurch. Whitchurch Town Council feel the perpetrators know they can repeat these crimes/incidents as there is no Police available. How will West Mercia Police deal with this situation?
- A. The Police Crime Figures with regard to ASB are stable.
- Q. How will West Mercia Police build relationships with the community to increase confidence in the Police?
- A. West Mercia Police realise that building confidence is demonstration of good response times.
- Q. When incidents have arisen and reported to 101, there can be a wait of up to 30 mins before a call is answered. This not only deters people from reporting crime/incidents, it does not encourage reporting. How will West Mercia Police improve this service in order to increase and encourage people to report incidents? One of the ways Whitchurch Town Council think WMP could improve reporting is by offering an email address or Facebook message service for reporting incidents.
- A. There was a significant problem with 101 in summer 2016 with the increase in demand on the 101 number. For 101 calls the Police have a target of answering 80% calls within 30 seconds, this target is currently at 82%. For 999 calls the target is 90% in 10 seconds. There are delays in answering calls when surges arise during events or incidents. People can always email the Safer Neighbourhood Team PC or call the mobile of the local officer.
- Q. Whitchurch Town Council have only just heard about the ShropCops Facebook page – could this be advertised better?
- A. This page is not for reporting incidents and more and more people are sharing information on social media rather than reporting the crime or incident. If information on social media can be read by the Police, it can be read by the criminals – please report intelligence to the Police rather than share it on social media.
- Q. Whitchurch Town Council appreciate that the local Policing team is busy, but perhaps the Police could attend full Council meetings on a monthly basis to update the Council on the work it's undertaking to tackle the state of crime that is happening.
- A. Operational duties take priority, but if an officer is available then they can attend to give an update or provide a written report. There should be a good working relationship between Whitchurch Town Council and the Safer Neighbourhood Team.
- Q. It has been reported to Whitchurch Town Council that a PCSO stated at a public meeting that there is only one PC on duty after 10pm in the whole of North Shropshire – is this correct?
- A. There are officers on duty in North Shropshire after 10pm, this statement is not true.
- Q. What is the future of Whitchurch Police Station?
- A. Current building is not fit for purpose and there is a plan to share with the fire station, but always to prioritise front-line 'troops'.

Further questions from Councillors and public:

Q. A lot of crime is unreported, the local Policing teams used to be proactive, working with young people, rather than reactive to ASB, as is happening now. As a former youth worker I think Police should work with schools & youth groups proactively.

A. Please contact the local Policing Team Inspector or Sergeant regarding issues of working together. Always the Police must be informed of crime, the Police can only make a difference if an incident is reported.

Q. If PCC is holding the Chief Constable to account and more enforcement means less work, Police need to enforce the law and CSOs have the right training and powers, otherwise 'citizen's arrests' may increase?

A. Enforcement is important and the Police service are doing their job and do not encourage 'citizen's arrest'. If public want to get involved, WMP are currently running community speedwatch programmes.

After a proposal from Cllr Chesters, seconded by Cllr O'Neill, it was **WTC/50/1718 RESOLVED** to suspend Standing Orders.

- The Chair of Whitchurch Town Twinning Association thanked Whitchurch Town Council for the Frances Frith picture which was presented to Neufchatel-en-Bray Council.

Public Questions for PCC:

Q. Have Police resources been moved into bigger towns or has there been a reduction in officers?

A. PCC believes that things can get better. The number of officers are slightly irrelevant, but that Police are reactive to incidents. We need a system of policing that keeps us safe.

Q. Whitchurch Herald are running a crime file!

A. PCC is never going to get rid of crime.

Q. I like the initiatives mentioned, what is the PCC expecting to deliver in the next 6-12 months?

A. Back Office computer change.

All Police have SMART phones/laptops to enable mobile working.

To drive through a culture change – culture change – Police being accessible within next 6 months.

Q. People don't feel safe with large gatherings of young people around the town.

A. There needs to be a balance between fixing causes of these things and the perception of ASB.

9. Shropshire Councillor's Report

Cllr Dakin reported>

- that Prees Heath roundabout will be resurfaced and this will affect travel north and south. A map with alternative routes will be on display in the Civic Centre foyer.
- Shropshire Councillors and Whitchurch Town Councillors hold surgeries on the last Friday of the month in the Civic Centre foyer – if you have any questions about the diversions please come and ask us.

After a proposal from Cllr Chesters, seconded by Cllr McAuley, it was **WTC/51/1718 RESOLVED** to reinstate standing orders.

10. Correspondence

- a. Letter from Whitchurch Town Twinning Association. After a proposal from Cllr Broders, seconded by Cllr Chesters, it was **WTC/52/1718 RESOLVED** to send the draft response.
- b. Letter from Shropshire Council regarding new Street Names. After a proposal from Cllr McAuley, seconded by Cllr Broders, it was **WTC/53/1718 RESOLVED** to accept the new street names.
- c. The thank you letter from Whitchurch Waterways Trust was received.
- d. Following a verbal request to keep the Civic Centre open on Saturday afternoons and a proposal from Cllr Hall, seconded by Cllr McAuley, it was **WTC/54/1718 RESOLVED** to keep the staff levels as they are on Saturday afternoons.

11. Outstanding Council Resolutions

- (a) **Civic Centre Freehold** – emails had been sent to Steve Law and Neil Willcox, no response received to date.
- (b) **Skateboard Park** – desk based research has been undertaken to understand whether the land is contaminated and RSK Environmental Ltd will now come to site to undertake land investigations.
- (c) **Increased Town Centre Signage** – no update.

12. Future Medical Provision

No further update.

13. Month 4 & 5 Accounts

After a proposal from Cllr Hall, seconded by Cllr McAuley, it was **WTC/55/1718 RESOLVED** to accept the accounts as presented.

14. External Auditors Report

Take to next Finance Committee meeting.

15. Minutes from Committees

- **Finance Committee** – Cllr Chesters reported that Finance & Resources Committee had separated into Finance Committee and Personnel Committee. The matter of the SLA with SC is on-going. After a proposal from Cllr Chesters, seconded by Cllr McAuley, it was **WTC/56/1718 RESOLVED** to accept the minutes from the Finance Committee held on 29th June 2017.
- **Parks & Public Realm** – Cllr O'Neill reported that increased signage in Jubilee Park had been installed and the park had also lost a few trees due to vandalism. After a proposal from Cllr O'Neill, seconded by Cllr McAuley, it was **WTC/57/1718 RESOLVED** to accept the minutes from the Parks & Public Realm Committee held on 29th June 2017.
- **Civic Centre Committee** – After a proposal from Cllr McAuley, seconded by Cllr O'Neill, it was **WTC/58/1718 RESOLVED** to accept the minutes from the Civic Centre Committee held on 13th July 2017.
- **Heritage Committee** – Cllr Duffy reported that general maintenance is on-going, the Committee wished to install replacement sash windows in the Heritage Centre, there was a steady increase in visitor numbers and current volunteer time equated to 3.5 F/T equivalent hours. After a proposal from Cllr Duffy, seconded by Cllr O'Neill, it was **WTC/59/1718 RESOLVED** to accept the minutes from the Heritage Committee meeting held on 20th July 2017.

- **Planning Committee** – After a proposal from Cllr Duffy, seconded by Cllr McAuley, it was **WTC/60/1718 RESOLVED** to accept the minutes from the Planning Committee meeting held on 8th August 2017.

16. Report from Members on Outside Organisations

- Community Led Plan refresh group meeting – 8th August – Cllr Duffy
- Whitchurch Patient Group – meetings on 31st August and 19th September – Cllr Duffy reported that the group had received an update on the work progressing the medical centre

17. Shropshire Council Parking Strategy Consultation

- Whitchurch has 85% independent retailers and requests no more parking charge rises.
- Smaller market towns should not have the same price banding as Shrewsbury.
- Paid parking should not be increased to 8pm in smaller market towns.
- The closing date of 17th October was noted.

Shropshire Councillor Gerald Dakin will debate at Cabinet on behalf of Whitchurch Town Council. After a proposal from Cllr Hall, seconded by Cllr Broders, it was **WTC/61/1718 RESOLVED** that the Clerk would set up a meeting with Shropshire Councillors and Whitchurch Town Councillors to submit a joint response from the town.

18. Proposed Changes to Parking Restrictions

After a proposal from Cllr Duffy, seconded by Cllr Chesters, it was **WTC/62/1718 RESOLVED** that the response to Shropshire Council should state that the plan introducing loading bays is not fit for purpose and that there should be a weight limit in the town centre.

19. Town Council Insurance

The Council have a duty to protect financial value of Council items, after a proposal from Cllr McAuley, seconded by Cllr Broders, it was **WTC/63/1718 RESOLVED** that Whitchurch Town Council should get advice on whether the specified items should be valued.

20. Standing Orders Amendment

After a proposal from Cllr Chesters, seconded by Cllr Duffy, it was **WTC/64/1718 RESOLVED** to accept the amendment to Standing Orders paragraph 30 sub-paragraphs.

21. Terms of Reference

After a proposal from Cllr McAuley, seconded by Cllr Broders, it was **WTC/65/1718 RESOLVED** that the Heritage Courtyard Retail Units come under the Civic Centre Committee.

22. Planning Negotiations

After a proposal by Cllr Duffy, seconded by Cllr McAuley, it was **WTC/66/1718 RESOLVED** that the Clerk will duly write to Shropshire Council Planning Department.

23. Bar Lounge Decoration

After a proposal by Cllr McAuley, seconded by Cllr Hall, it was **WTC/67/1718 RESOLVED** that Council officers will undertake the research, design and costs to redecorate the Bar Lounge.

24. H&S

After a proposal from Cllr Duffy, seconded by Cllr Hall, it was **WTC/68/1718 RESOLVED** to accept the quote from Ellis Whittam for a fixed 3-year H&S contract.

25. CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

After a proposal from Cllr Duffy, seconded by Cllr O'Neill, it was **WTC/69/1718 RESOLVED** that under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1060, 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.

26. Jubilee Park Play Area Extension

After a proposal by Cllr McAuley, seconded by Cllr Broders, it was **WTC/70/1718 RESOLVED** that Council accepts the Clerk's recommendation.

27. Is This Council Working Effectively?

Following discussions, it was agreed that the Town Council will have a stall at The Makers Market, the first Saturday of every month, starting with Blackberry Fair. The Town Councillors would also meet separately to discuss this further.

28. Councillor Email Addresses

After a proposal from Cllr Chesters, seconded by Cllr O'Neill, it was **WTC/71/1718 RESOLVED** that Town Councillors may choose to have their own @whitchurchcouncil.uk email address, but they would need to pay for it. Further discussion on this will be held at the separate meeting.

Meeting closed at 9.25pm.

Chairman.....

Date.....