

LEDBURY TOWN

TO ALL ELECTORS OF LEDBURY TOWN

You are invited to take part in the ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

To be held at
The Community Hall, Lawnside, Ledbury
on Thursday 25th April 2019
at 7.30pm

To be Chaired by Cllr Nina Shields, Chairman of Ledbury Town Council

The Town Meeting may, by law, discuss all Town affairs and pass resolutions about them.

Agenda

1. Presentation of Distinguished Citizen Award for 2018-2019.
2. Apologies.
3. To confirm the accuracy of the Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 26th April 2018 (copies available). **(pages 1-2)**
4. Chairman's Report.
5. Committee Chair Reports: **(to follow)**
 - a) Economic Development and Planning Committee. **(pages 3-5)**
 - b) Environment and Leisure Committee. **(pages 6-7)**
 - c) Finance and General Purposes Committee. **(pages 8-9)**
6. Town Council's Estimates of Income & Expenditure 2019/20. **(to follow)**
7. Comments and Questions from any Elector of Ledbury Parish.



Councillor Nina Shields
Chairman
17.04.2018

Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting
Held at Ledbury Community Hall
On Thursday 26th April 2018

Present: Councillor Fieldhouse – Mayor of the Town Council (Chair)
In attendance: Emma Thomas – Clerk cover and Jennifer Eva – Deputy Clerk
Parishioners: 57

1. Presentation of Distinguished Citizen awards for 2018

There were four Distinguished Citizen Awards, one Youth Achievement Award and one Joint Award for Twinning Activities. The individuals who had made the nominations introduced the award winners and spoke further about their achievements. Awards were presented by the Mayor to:

A: Reo Selwyn. (Youth Achievement) Cllr Keith Francis explained that Reo had been nominated for the fund raising he has done to support "Bailey" the Ledbury Primary School Dog, who is being trained under the "Dogs Helping Kids" scheme. Reo is in year 6 and has raised over £1300 in support of this cause.

B: Ken Davies. Mr. Clive Jupp nominated Ken for "outstanding commitment to Ledbury community". Ken restarted Ledbury Carnival some 30 years ago and was one of the key inspirations behind the starting of Ledbury in Bloom.

C: Jennifer Harrison. Cllr Robert Barnes nominated Jennifer for her research into the history of Ledbury, particularly the Great War – both militarily and socially. Jennifer was also one of the key organisers of the rededication of the Ledbury Recreation Ground.

D: Clive Jupp. Hilary Jones nominated Clive for being a stalwart of Ledbury Community for 25 years – including 20 years on the Town Council and twice Mayor. Clive has been heavily involved in Ledbury Carnival, Ledbury Strömstad Twinning Association, Ledbury in Bloom and Ledbury Places to name a few.

E: Helen Moody. Helen was nominated by several parishioners for her organisation of events for the community including Viking Day, Halloween celebration and Tudor Christmas. All these events have helped promote Ledbury.

F: Ledbury Community Choir. (Joint Award for Twinning Activities between the towns of Strömstad and Ledbury) The choir was nominated for it's outstanding commitment to twinning activities between the two towns.

2. Apologies.

No apologies were received.

3. To confirm the accuracy of the Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 27th April 2017.

The minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 27th April 2017 were APPROVED as a correct record and SIGNED by the Chair.

4. Town Mayor's Report.

The Town Mayor, Councillor Elaine Fieldhouse, welcomed everyone to the Annual Town Meeting and read her report regarding the Council's achievements and actions during 2017-18. These included the Neighbourhood Development Plan, the rededication of Ledbury Recreation Ground and involvement with local schools. Appendix 1

5. a) Summary of Town Council's work during 2017/18 by the Committee Chairmen.

5.1 Environment and Leisure Committee

Councillor A. Bradford, Chairman of the Environment and Leisure Committee, presented a summary of the work undertaken by the Committee during 2017-18 – Appendix 2

5.2 Planning and Economic Development Committee

Councillor A. Crowe, Chairman of the Planning and Economic Development Committee, presented a report highlighting the large number of houses that have been granted planning permission around Ledbury during 2017-18, and the importance, therefore, of the NDP. – Appendix 3

Cllr Crowe resigned from her position as councillor and left the meeting

5.3 Finance and General Purposes Committee

Councillor Robert Barnes, Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee, presented a summary of the role of the committee, the reason why the precept has increased this coming year and confirmation that no issues have ever been identified by either internal or external auditors as to the financial management of the Town Council. – Appendix 4

b) Town Council's Estimates of Income & Expenditure 2018/19.

The estimates of income and expenditure were NOTED

6. Comments and Questions from any Elector of Ledbury Parish.

- Why were the minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 31st May 2017 not on the agenda for approval? – *The clerk covering the meeting reported that she was unaware, at the time the agenda was set, that there had been another Town Meeting. She did, however, confirm that the notes from this meeting had been taken to the next Council Meeting on the 8th June 2017 for consideration, as was right and proper.*
- Total precept is £375,000 of which £64,309 has been spent on solicitors fees. Can the council comment on this? - *The council is involved in a legal case that was brought to the council and the payment for professional services was required.*
- A query was raised about the extra hours that the groundsman had worked. *It was confirmed that the groundsman had been paid his overtime and an assistant groundsman has now been appointed.*
- Has the vacancy for town councillor been advertised? *It was noted that the paperwork has been put up and advertised.*
- What is the outcome of the judicial review? *It was reported that this is still awaited.*
- Were all council members allowed to decide what to do with regard to the Judicial Review? *All recommendations from Standing Committees are taken to Full Council for approval.*
- Which councillors sit on the Standing Committee? - *The Chairs of all the committees.*
- Are decisions taken available to view on minutes? – Yes
- Will the cost of the judicial review come out of the precept? - *The advice given to the Council was indemnified. In the event that the advice was wrong the Council is then covered by insurance.*
- Has the mediation for councillors following the judicial review started? No – as the *Judicial Review outcome is not yet known.*

Cllr Barnes resigned for his position as councillor.

The meeting closed at 8.50pm

Signed: _____ Dated: _____

Economic Development and Planning Committee Report 2018/2019

As the name suggests, the Economic Development & Planning Committee, or ED&P, is responsible for any matters concerning Ledbury's economic development and planning issues. The 'ED' side of 'ED&P' is often neglected when we speak about what we do, so I will start with that.

This year has seen the Neighbourhood Plan finally get approved at Herefordshire Council, following some changes recommended by a consultant. There are now ongoing working groups for both the Town Plan and the Neighbourhood Plan. The Town Plan is complete and some progress is being made towards updating it.

The Neighbourhood Plan needs to be completed still, because the settlement boundary drawn up in the first version would not have passed inspection. The working group reports that they are hopeful of completing a new version by February 2020. They are also working with Ledbury Sports Federation to look at ways that sports provision could be included, as well as looking at infrastructure aspects like medical provision, schools and public places, both of which are major issues in the light of the many planned developments.

Traffic management has become a big issue for us of late. We originally planned to deal with the issues through a task-and-finish group, but there has been so much public response that we now have an ongoing working party that includes many members of the public, chaired by Cllr Howells. There are many issues arising – parking, speeding, people unable to get out of their roads when they are blocked – and people are interested, particularly in view of the many potential developments ongoing.

As a result, it will be proposed to the newly elected Town Council later this month that a strategic traffic management plan form a coherent part of the updated Town and Neighbourhood Plans, and potentially also of a town economic strategy.

Onto the 'P' side of 'ED&P', Ledbury Town Council is a consultee for all planning applications that come into Herefordshire Council. We recommend either supporting or opposing applications, as does the relevant ward councillor. As you will know for sure, the really big issue facing us as a town is the sheer scale of potential planning developments proposed for us.

The **Viaduct** site, to the north of town, which was identified in Herefordshire Council's core strategy and a development site for up to 625 dwellings, to meet the target set for Ledbury of 800+ by 2031. It should be stressed that this is part of the core strategy because that means it will go ahead in some form, regardless of whether other applications. There are many people who are unhappy about this site because of the potential for flooding and who think that

the developments proposed to the south of town are a better idea. However, it isn't either/or.

Bloor Homes has put in an application to develop this site, which LTC has seen more than once. The real issue here is access. The developer aims to have this solely through a new roundabout off Bromyard Road, something LTC and virtually all residents who have expressed an opinion, regard as not acceptable. We have serious concerns about the ability of the junction by the railway station to cope with the pressure from the additional traffic. Our view has always been that there should be main road access under the viaduct as well as this, serving two thirds of the houses and the employment land.

Secondly, off **Dymock Road**, Gladman Developments succeeded on appeal in overturning a decision by Herefordshire Council's Planning Committee to get approval by the Planning Inspectorate. As everyone will know, they sold the option to Barratt Homes and building has begun, only to be halted by a judicial review by the cheese factory, who were naturally concerned about the danger of having to shell out for noise reduction measures. Barratt have scaled back the development and the number of houses involved slightly from 321 to 288 (?) but it is still substantial.

One of the things on which developers almost always try to sell their proposals to the public is the possibility of affordable housing for locals, but of course they would rather build four-bed houses that sell for more both in absolute terms and brick-for-brick. Given that this development is ongoing, Cllr Harvey and I worked with our county council hats – and in the absence of the councillor for Ledbury South – to get as much affordable housing as possible into the mix, but we should be on the lookout for any attempt to scale this back for any reason.

In the second field along the Dymock Road, Gladman are at it again, seeking permission to build a further 470 houses on a separate development, supposedly including up to – note 'up to' - 188 affordable units. This is still at the outline stage and has not come forward as an application yet, but it is worth mentioning that they are seeking access through the ongoing Barratts development, which potentially would mean the cars from 750 and more houses all descending on the Leadon Way roundabout, along with those passing by the town and those coming in from the Deer Park side.

I pass over the potential for further applications by others along the Leadon Way, suffice to say that this remains a possibility, including one from Bovis for 185 houses to the east of the Barratt site that reached the outline application stage before stalling. One that is still ongoing is further back on the **Little Marcle Road**, in the fields opposite the Homebase roundabout, where Gladman – again – have put forward an application for 210 houses on another greenfield site. This is land where an application for a golf course was – allegedly - once turned down because of flooding issues!

Now, all of this naturally has huge implications for Ledbury. If all of these applications go ahead, in addition to the 100 homes on the former cricket pitch, we are talking about nearly a 50% increase in the population from about 9,800

today to over 14,000. This has huge implications for the infrastructure, including pressure on schools, doctors' surgeries, parking, the sewage system and of course the roads, not to mention the effect on traffic of construction work that might be ongoing for ten years.

As you may know, Ledbury is divided into three wards for the purposes of elections to parish and county council. These are entirely artificial and were not something the town council asked for, nor do they matter much internally. What does matter, given that there are major applications in all three wards, is that we work together as a town and as a council to do what we can to ensure that for members of the public, I can only ask you to make your voice heard. If you have strong feelings about an application, write to planning officers via the website to say so. And remember that developers are very good at boring people into submission. If an application is withdrawn and resubmitted with some amends, it becomes a new application and previous comments are no longer valid.

Secondly, please get involved. We will need to co-opt a number of new councillors after the election, so please consider whether you might be able to commit to this. You can always ask any of us for more about what it involves. Or if that is too much, there are numerous other ways you can help shape the future of the town, including joining the Neighbourhood Plan and Traffic Management working parties.

Report by:
Councillor Andrew Warmington
Chairman
Economic Development and Planning
17.04.2019

Environment and Leisure Committee

Report 2018/2019

I inherited a committee which had a very long list of outstanding tasks and where several long standing tasks had simply been left undone or even forgotten about.

To achieve anything a task had to go through working parties, committee back to the working party back to the committee and then to full council. I have therefore concentrated on simplifying this process by dealing directly with most things at committee level and have only asked working parties to look at specific tasks.

This means that we have been able to achieve a large amount in a very short space of time and yet maintain the democratic scrutiny our voters deserve.

We have so far managed to:

- Order the new shelter for the recreation ground which will be installed in May.
- Tendered for the repair of the long standing damage to the cemetery wall this will start mid May.
- We have clarified the green spaces owned by Ledbury Town Council and have ensured that all areas will now have their trees inspected annually and all necessary work will be carried out in accordance with expert recommendations (these reports are also available if required)
- We have re-tendered for our maintenance contracts, these should have been re-tendered every three years but had instead been extended and extended.
- We have arranged for the gravestones in the cemetery to be inspected as there were several which were potentially unsafe.
- We have revised the management plan for Dog Hill wood to ensure it reflects current best practice.
- Cllr Whattler has surveyed every litter bin in town and our clerk is liaising with Balfour Beatty to replace any that are unsafe.
- We have updated the health and safety and traffic management policies for the October Fair to ensure it can continue into the future
- We have also begun work to ensure the War Memorial will be cherished as it deserves. We have a structural engineers report confirming that we need to undertake drainage work as although the current condition is good we need to take action now to prevent structural problems in the future. We need to do this before the cosmetic work needed to restore the memorials pristine condition.

We have now caught up with the backlog and I believe Environment and Leisure Committee is now in a position to move on with a clean slate.

But I couldn't have done it without help and as the outgoing chairman I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mrs Hill once again for her work with the Christmas lights and Mrs Harrison for her invaluable help with the War memorial.

Report by:
Councillor Jane Hopkins
Chairman of Environment and Leisure.
18.04.2019

Finance and General Purposes Committee Report 2018/19

2018/19 was a year of transition and rebuilding, particularly for the Finance and General Purposes committee. As well as infrastructure and personnel development we had to rebuild the reputation of the council.

Taking the lead from a new council chairman, the watchwords for the year were transparency, accountability and prudence.

Transparency

The council spent over £120,000 on legal advice in a failed Judicial Review defence and was left with costs of nearly £100,000. This was caused by a mixture of bad advice, failure to act on good advice and poor application of procedures.

Over the year we as a committee sought to rebuild the reserves required by the council. Along with the rest of the council we have done this without reducing the quality of service provided to the town's parishioners. In order to deliver the services developed by the council over the year and to keep reserves at a satisfactory level, a 27% increase in the precept was voted on and passed by Full Council. This means a Band D household has gone from paying £1,833.08 to £1,955.14 yearly.

Prudence

Within this increase we have been able to finance the update of the council's IT infrastructure, properly fund the repair of the war memorial and continue to provide grants to those organisations that benefit the town.

With regard to grant applications we introduced a new process with a much lighter touch for smaller grants up to £500 and more rigorous controls for larger grants and those spanning more than one year.

We voted to end the contract with the Herefordshire Association of Local Councils, which had provided the initial advice to the led the council being taken to the catastrophic Judicial Review. It will be the job of the new council to source professional advice and training providers.

We also contracted to take professional Human Resources advice in order to avoid the mistakes of the past.

We have implemented much stricter controls on cheque signing and invoice approval, which means that all cheques must be signed at committee meetings where possible.

Under the lead of Cllr Hopkins, we have developed clear and strong GDPR policy and Risk Register.

Accountability

Public participation in council meetings has been encouraged. I hope this more generous interpretation of standing orders continues. We promised more town meetings to discuss single issues and the Finance and General Purposes Committee held one such meeting to discuss the approach to the financial implications of the previous council's decisions.

Work commitments have meant that I have occasionally not been able to chair meetings and I am very grateful for the support I have received from Cllr Baker. She

along with other colleagues on the committee have made it a pleasure to chair. I have been encouraged by the professional and friendly attitude all have taken.

I would also like to mention the hard work of the office staff and the council chairman.

Report by
Councillor Andrew Harrison
Chairman
Finance and General Purposes
17.04.2019