

LEDBURY TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF A MEETING OF FULL
COUNCIL HELD ON 25 JANUARY 2024

PRESENT: Councillors Bradford, Chowns, Eakin, Furlonger, Harvey, Howells, l'Anson (Chair), McAll, Morris, Newsham, Sinclair

ALSO PRESENT: Angela Price -Town Clerk
Julia Lawrence – Deputy Town Clerk
Charlotte Barltrop – Minute Taker
Justine Peberdy
6 Members of the public

C184. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Hughes.

C185. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Councillor McAll declared an interest in item 24 due to his involvement with Ledbury Rugby Football Club.

C186. NOLAN PRINCIPLES

The Mayor read the Nolan Principles to the members.

RESOLVED:

That the Nolan Principles be received and noted.

C187. APOLOGY FROM COUNCILLOR SINCLAIR TO LEDBURY TOWN COUNCIL AND THE RESIDENTS OF LEDBURY FOR BREACHING THE CODE OF CONDUCT

Councillor Sinclair made the following statement:

“Good evening, I am Councillor Sinclair and I am guilty of breaching the Code of Conduct.

It is quite ironic that I am making this apology to Residents and the Council, after the Nolan Principles were noted. Let's be quite clear if certain Councillors had been open, honest and transparent, this apology would not be necessary.

If it hadn't been for Steve Ellis bringing the desecration of the War Memorial to my attention and our persistent search for the truth, nothing would have happened. What I will say is, the previous Council appointed Ian Bishop to refurbish the War Memorial and he and his team have refurbished it to a very high standard.

Firstly, I would like to apologise to the residents for failing to notice the significance of an email dated 29 October 2020, informing certain Councillors that the Paving Stones were unsuitable. What followed was a web of deceit, to conceal what had happened, residents were misled in at least two public meetings, two of the culprits who misled the residents are sat in this room tonight; they are called Councillors Howells and Harvey. I disclosed the information, in an email dated 4 December 2023 to Fellow Councillors, none were interested in the truth, even when they knew what the truth was, but they were prepared to hang me out to dry, for trying to expose the truth.

Secondly, I would like to apologise to Ledbury Town Council for not taking steps to ensure members understood the full context of my seeking their authority to refer the matter to the Police from March to June 2023.”

During Councillor Sinclair’s apology some members expressed their discord with the content and wished to raise concerns. The Mayor and Clerk advised that if they had any feedback in relation to the apology, they should provide it through the process being undertaken with the Monitoring Officer.

Councillor Howells asked that it be noted that this was not an apology and that he resented and completely refuted any accusations of wrongdoing and indeed the only person found guilty of wrongdoing was Councillor Sinclair.

The Mayor thanked Councillor Sinclair for his statement.

C188. TO APPROVE AND SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF AN EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF FULL COUNCIL HELD ON 7 DECEMBER 2023

Councillor Harvey requested clarification on minute C177, which related to Smart Water, enquiring as to the lack of context surrounding this minute and why the decision was taken.

Councillor McAll stated that it was simply a case of discussing the risk versus the costs. It was deemed that the cost was inappropriately high, hence the decision.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the extraordinary meeting of Full Council held on 7 December 2023 be approved and signed as a correct record.

C189. HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCILLORS’ REPORTS

To receive reports from Ledbury Ward Members:

- i. Councillor Harvey
- ii. Councillor Peberdy
- iii. Councillor Simmons

RESOLVED:

That the Ward Reports be received and noted and that the Ward Councillors be thanked for their in-depth reports.

C190. MAYORS COMMUNICATIONS

Councillor l'Anson made the following statement:

Julian and I attended several Carol services, the most exciting was the Community Choirs Christmas Concert which was fabulous.

When I became a Ward Councillor in 2019, I campaigned for a venue to be found for our young, who have been without one since leaving their drop in centre. You probably saw me with my banner saying, "Give Our Youth a Drop In Before They Drop Out". There have been so many dead ends and hollow statements, being told things are in the pipeline, and that discussions are ongoing etc. etc. and nothing has actually happened. I am very pleased to report that the Kiln Church, who began worshipping on Sundays in the Community Centre in Ledbury over a year ago and whose pastor, David, is my chaplain, have taken the positive step of booking the Community Centre on Friday evenings from the beginning of March indefinitely to host a Youth Club with lots of activities, like volley ball and good things for the young to eat as well. The helpers are all being DBS checked at the moment, Kiln are doing this and they have not asked for a penny.

Moving on to 2024, we have lots of exciting things to look forward to, we have the Big Breakfast, the Mayor's Valentine's Coffee Morning, and there will be a celebration for International Women's Day which is very appropriate because we are fortunate in Ledbury that Women are very prominent, many traders are Women, we have all female Council Office staff, three female Ward Councillors and a female Mayor. We also have World Book Day and I am happy to announce that on 3 May at John Masefield Theatre we will be holding Ledbury's Got Talent.

We are also planning to hold a Councillor Coffee catchup which will, hopefully, involve all our Councillors and the Ward Councillors who can get together to discuss matters which can be taken to Herefordshire Council.

Something to look out for is a film which is coming out which is known as "Ledbury Actually" or #Carryonco-opting.

RESOLVED:

That the Mayor's Communication be received and noted.

C191. TO CONSIDER QUESTIONS/COMMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROVISIONS OF STANDING ORDERS 3(E) AND 3(F)

Brenda Hill, member of the Friends of the Cemetery group, spoke regarding the future of the cemetery.

She stated that she was upset that the residents had not been informed of the discussion that would take place and that Ledbury Town Council should consult with the residents of the Town prior to making decisions of this nature. She stated that the lack of Councillor surgeries meant that Councillors were not available to speak with.

Councillor l'Anson advised that she had called for a Parish Meeting to be convened which would be held on Thursday, 15 February, venue to be confirmed, at 6pm in order to discuss this matter and allow residents to have their say.

Councillor Bradford reminded those present that all meetings are publicised and open to the public and that the agendas for all meetings were advertised both online and in the Town Council notice board. He stated that surgeries had been in place, but these had not been attended so had been abandoned, although he was not averse to reinstating them. Councillor Sinclair advised that when he first joined the Council he had held surgeries for a period of six-weeks under the Market House, but only one person stopped to speak to him and therefore he had decided not to continue with these.

Councillor McAll agreed that Councillor surgeries should be in place and promised to investigate this matter personally.

Tony Hodder spoke regarding the provision of a Youth Club in Ledbury. He informed Members that LYAS is in the process of signing a lease agreement to use St Katherine's Hall as a Youth Club and that this work is being carried out in conjunction with LEAF, Ledbury RFC and several Ledbury Schools. The group would like to carry out a consultation and have submitted a request for funding which is at item 24 of the agenda.

C192. Councillor McAll proposed to move item 24 of the agenda, Ledbury Youth Consultation Exercise, to this point in the meeting to allow members of the public to listen to the discussion fully and leave afterward should they so wish.

Councillor Sinclair proposed that item 12, Minutes of the Environment & Leisure Committee meeting held on 4 January 2024, be moved to this point for the same reasons.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That item 12 be moved to this point in the agenda.**
- 2. That item 24 be moved to this point in the agenda.**

C193. TO RECEIVE AND NOTE THE MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENT & LEISURE COMMITTEE HELD ON 4 JANUARY 2024 AND TO GIVE CONSIDERATION TO ANY RECOMMENDATIONS THEREIN

Councillor Chowns presented the minutes of the meeting of the Environment & Leisure Committee held on 4 January 2024.

Councillor Harvey pointed out that whilst the item discussed in minute E88, Future of Cemetery Land provision, will be referred to a Parish Meeting, if members of the public had been present at the Environment & Leisure meeting on 4 January 2024, they would not have been able to listen to the item named as it was a confidential item on the agenda.

Councillor Harvey asked whether this item had been included in the S106 wish list as there may be discussions which can be had with developers regarding this matter. She went on to state that she was not in favour of holding a Parish Meeting until further information could be provided to attendees regarding the matter. She stated that LTC need to look at all the options fully, including inclusion in the NDP and the possible creation of a Green Gap – Woodland Burial Site.

RESOLVED:

1. **That the minutes of a meeting of the Environment & Leisure Committee held on 4 January 2024 be received and noted.**
2. **Minute no. E78(1) - That the Exclusive Right of Burial exceeding 18 years (Ledbury Resident) be increased from £462.00 to £500.00.**
3. **Minute no. E78(2) - That the Exclusive Right of Burial in the Garden of Remembrance (Ledbury Resident) be increased from £154.00 to £200.00.**
4. **Minute no. E80 - That it be noted that this the recommendation had been superseded by a further meeting of the Christmas Lights Task & Finish Group, and that this was now being progressed by officers.**
5. **Minute no. E88 - That it be noted that the Mayor had requested that a Parish Meeting be convened to allow an open discussion with residents and to enable Council to outline the potential costs involved and therefore this recommendation had been superseded.**
6. **That the provision of cemetery land be considered as a key objective in the Neighbourhood Development Plan.**

C194. LEDBURY YOUTH CONSULTATION EXERCISE - REQUEST FROM COUNCILLOR MCALL

Tony Hodder was invited to speak further regarding this item.

He stated that this was an exercise to engage with young people in Ledbury, working with Rural Media who had previously worked on this type of project. He advised that this will be a professional consultation, which will be clear in terms of the evidence it provides. The consultation will cost a total of £2,000, which will be funded from various sources within the project, £500 of which is being requested from Ledbury Town Council.

Councillor Sinclair proposed that the grant be approved.

Councillor Harvey asked whether this request should be considered via the Council's grant's application procedure.

A question was raised in respect of funds that had been agreed previously to assist LYAS but had not been used. Tony Hodder advised that it was his recollection that these funds were to cover the costs of rent and as such would be drawn down in the future, advising that the £500 being requested was separate to those funds. It was explained to newer Councillors that the monies being referred to were granted to LYAS in 2019 and had been granted for the payment of rent for premisses, at the time this was the Barratt Browning Institute, however after the first year of the grant the agreement ended, and the two subsequent years promised have been placed into earmarked reserves until such time as new premisses are secured.

Councillors agreed that the provision of a Youth Club by LYAS was a welcome return for the community. It was proposed that the request for £500 should be granted subject to the receipt of the appropriate grant application from those involved.

Councillor Eakin proposed an amendment to Councillor Sinclair's as follows:

That the grant for £500 be approved in principle, subject to receipt of a completed grant application. Councillor seconded the amendment.

A vote was taken on whether to accept the amendment, which was accepted, therefore this became the substantive motion to be voted on.

RESOLVED:

That the request of £500 grant funding be approved in principle subject to receipt of a completed grant application form.

Councillor Eakin left the meeting at 8.27pm

C195. TO RECEIVE MOTIONS PRESENTED BY COUNCILLORS IN ACCORDANCE WITH STANDING ORDER 9

Councillor McAll had submitted the following Motion seconded by Councillor Newsham:

That a working party of selected staff and councillors to define and produce a procedure to support proper internal analysis and consideration of issues and initiatives before they are deemed fit for public consumption.”

Councillor McAll expanded on his Motion, detailing a further example that had arisen in respect of the Cemetery issues. He explained that it was about finding a mechanism whereby the Council can work together to research matters ahead of them being brought into the public domain.

There were concerns that having meetings of Councillors to discuss matters ahead of them being discussed at Council meetings, which are held in the public domain, could be considered untransparent.

Councillor Harvey stated that whilst she understood the concerns around transparency, and that information on agendas and minutes being in the public domain once published, however she understood that this motion was about the work put into the preparation of the agendas so that when something is published into the public domain it has been thought through and that the information is presented in a cogent manner and which provides the options to Council before making a decision. She recognised that many of the reports provided by officers provide this, however there is room for improvement. She added that given the most recent issues raised in local press and social media there is a need to look at how the Council can do things to have a more robust approach which will in turn reduce the frequency of these sorts of concerns, to avoid the undermining of public confidence in the Council.

Councillor McAll reassured Members that he was not proposing that council business should not be shared with the public, it was about finding a way to make it clear to the public that often what is shared is embryonic thinking and not Council policy.

Following considerable discussion Councillor McAll offered an amendment to his proposal as follows:

That a Working Party be established of Staff, Councillors and public representatives to define and produce a procedure to support proper internal analysis and consideration of issues and initiatives before they are deemed as representative of the Council's formal view.

Councillor Sinclair expressed concern that this would mean that Council business would be conducted behind closed doors rather than in public meetings and therefore he did not feel that he could not support the motion.

Councillor Sinclair called for a named vote:

Councillor Bradford	Against
Councillor Chowns	Abstained
Councillor Furlonger	For
Councillor Harvey	For
Councillor Howells	For
Councillor l'Anson	For
Councillor McAll	For
Councillor Morris	For
Councillor Newsham	For
Councillor Sinclair	Against

RESOLVED:

That a working party comprising of staff, Councillors and public representatives be established to define and produce a procedure to support proper internal analysis and consideration of issues and initiatives before they are deemed as representative of the Council's formal view.

C196. TO RECEIVE AND NOTE THE MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD ON 7 DECEMBER 2023 AND TO GIVE CONSIDERATION TO ANY RECOMMENDATIONS THEREIN

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of a meeting of the Resources Committee held on 7 December 2023 be received and noted.

C197. TO RECEIVE AND NOTE THE MINUTES OF MEETINGS OF THE PLANNING, ECONOMY & TOURISM COMMITTEE HELD ON 14 DECEMBER 2023 AND 11 JANUARY 2024 AND TO GIVE CONSIDERATION TO ANY RECOMMENDATIONS THEREIN

Councillor Harvey asked whether the listed items at minute P148.2 on page 1040 had been decided upon in conjunction with a Highways Engineer.

Councillor Howells stated that this list had been drawn up as part of a walk-around with the locality steward and highways engineer.

Councillor Harvey asked that going forward, once the issues have been identified, a list of issues is drawn up and provided to Highways Engineers for discussion in an attempt to identify what the appropriate solutions are.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the minutes of the meetings of the Planning, Economy & Tourism Committee held on 14 December 2023 and 11 January 2024 be received and noted.**

2. **That the recommendation from minute P148.2 be submitted to Hereford Council Officers for further consideration and discussion.**

Councillor McAll left the meeting at 9.01pm.

Councillor McAll returned to the meeting at 9.02pm.

C198. SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 3(x)

RESOLVED:

To suspend Standing Order 3(x) for a period of fifteen minutes to enable urgent business of the agenda to be completed.

C199. TO CONSIDER QUOTES RECEIVED FOR TREE FELLING AT DOG HILL WOODS

Councillor Sinclair raised concerns regarding the quotation received from company 4, noting that it was considerably lower than the other three quotations received and did not appear to be like for like.

The Deputy Clerk advised that all of the companies had received the same specification. This had initially included the works being carried out under a full road closure, however, post an instruction from BBLP that a single lane must be open, each company was advised of this and whilst three of the companies had increased their quotes company 1 had not. She advised that she spoke with them to discuss this with them following which they increased their quote by £750.

RESOLVED:

That Company 1 be appointed to undertake the tree felling at Dog Hill Wood, in the week commencing 12 February 2024, as per the specification provided in the report.

C200. RECOMMENDATION FOLLOWING MEETINGS WITH HOOPLE AND NALC HELD ON 15 AND 17 JANUARY

There was a short discussion regarding the meeting with NALC whereby Councillors Harvey, Bradford and Morris expressed their concerns about being members of NALC/HALC due to past experiences with the organisation.

Councillor Howells expressed his sympathy for the past experiences but stated that the Council should have followed the advice of the Monitoring Officer in the previous case and that Ledbury Town Council needed to work with a company who could provide industry specific advice.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That Ledbury Town Council join NALC and HALC at a cost of £2,085.16, noting that joining now would provide 14-months service for the cost of 12-months and that paying fees prior to 31 March 2024 would entitle them to two free Councillor only spaces on any 2024/5 HALC evening training event, valued at £50.00 each.**
- 2. That the Clerk be instructed to authorise payment of the invoice in the sum of £2,085.16 (plus VAT) to join NALC/HALC.**

The meeting was adjourned at 9.16pm.

Signed Dated

(Town Mayor)

DRAFT