

LEDBURY TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF A RECONVENED MEETING OF FULL COUNCIL
HELD ON 10 APRIL 2024

PRESENT: Councillors Chowns, Furlonger, Howells, Hughes, l'Anson, McAll, Morris, and Newsham.

ALSO PRESENT: Angela Price -Town Clerk
Julia Lawrence – Deputy Town Clerk
Sophie Jarvis – Minute Taker
2 members of the public

C227. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bradford and Sinclair.

C228. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

No declarations of interest were received.

C229. NEW MODEL CONTRACT OF EMPLOYMENT FOR LOCAL COUNCILS.

RESOLVED:

That the New Model Contract of Employment be implemented for any future new employees or if a new contract is provided to current employees e following amendments to their current terms and conditions.

C230. INTERNAL/EXTERNAL AUDIT

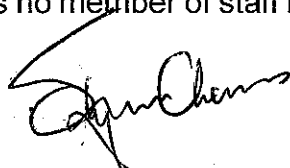
RESOLVED:

That the information received from PKF Littlejohn in respect of the 2023/24 AGAR submission be received and noted.

C231. UPDATE ON COMMITTEE STRUCTURE TASK & FINISH GROUP

Councillor McAll provided a verbal update on the research he had been carrying out into a GDPR compliant Ninox Database. He advised that the Ninox database would cost circa £10 per month per officer to operate. It was also noted that this database has other online support that could be utilised.

Councillor McAll advised that he had asked the Clerk to provide information on how much of the daily work of each staff member is based around routine work. He advised that he had not realised to much of the work undertaken by staff on a routine basis was as high as had been indicated by staff. He pointed out that from the analysis no member of staff had more than 25% of their time that could



be allocated to non-routine work, which is quite restraining on staff being available to support all of the initiatives that Council are doing and want to do in the future, amplifying the need to prioritise workloads.

Councillor McAll also stated that he considered it was pointless putting new processes in place, if the Council does not have the right attitude and cultures to make them work, which he feels wraps into wider thinking about the Council works as a group.

Councillor McAll advised that his next step would be for him to meet with the Clerk to review this database model and prepare a draft model.

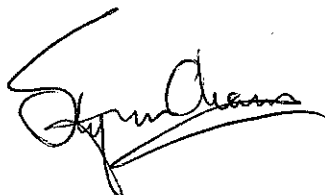
Councillor Hughes questioned what the time frames for completion on the process being considered by the Committee Structure Task & Finish Group. He highlighted that the Task & Finish Group originally discussed the restructure in May 2023 and at that time it was anticipated that there would be a plan in place for consideration at the Council meeting in September 2023, with a completed plan being in place for the Annual Council Meeting in May 2024.

Councillor Hughes noted that this was an internal process that the Council were going through, which does not appear to be providing core services to the residents of Ledbury, although he appreciated that by going through this the Council may well be better at providing services to residents in the future.

He felt that there were a couple of "quick wins" to be considered. Initially there were two clear aims at the beginning of this process in May 2023. The first being to divide, in law, the role of Mayor and Chair of Council and Chair of Business, and he did not feel that the Council had got anywhere near that in 12-months. The expectation was that this would assist all the issues raised at the time i.e. the work of the Clerk and staff and make decision making easier and more robust, however the Council appear to have got bogged down in some sort of process where the process becomes more important than the outcome.

Councillor Hughes stated that the second thing that was to be considered was to redefine the role of the Resources Committee into something more approaching a Management Committee and that the notion of Resources or elements of the Resources Committee would be included in the Terms of Reference of the Finance, Policy & General Purposes Committee, leaving the management of business of the Council, delivering to the residents, a smaller committee answerable to Full Council which could co-ordinate the work of the council. He stated that that was what the Council had set out to do, but somehow it has got lost, and he was hoping that this could now be resolved.

Members agreed with Councillor Hughes' comments and noted that this needed to be put in place as soon as possible. Councillor Howells stated that from his experience of being Mayor it can be very difficult to juggle both sides of the role and it would be wise to split this role. Councillor Howells informed members that Ross-on-Wye had been through a similar process of creating a separate



Management Committee which allows them to deal with more long-term projects there is continuity for both staff and councillors.

Councillor McAll pointed out that if the Council are fundamentally in agreement that there needs to be a change in respect of the role of Mayor and that going forward the role of Mayor be as a Civic role and that the business side of the role be separated and taken up by another Councillor, who would in turn be the Chair of the proposed Management Committee, then surely those present at the meeting could take a vote on this tonight and make this happen. He added that he felt this restructure would help the process being undertaken by the Task & Finish Group.

Councillor Furlonger asked whether there were any negative implications of making this decision. Councillor Hughes advised that a structure had been presented in May 2023, and what would need to be done to enable this change to be implemented at the Annual Council meeting in May 2024 would be a complete set of revised Terms of Reference for the Standing Committees for adoption at that meeting. He pointed out that if these were available at that meeting, along with a statement of the Committee roles, then it would be possible for the changes to the structure to be agreed at that meeting.

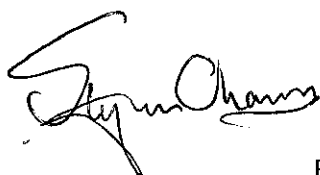
Councillor Hughes proposed that himself and the Clerk meet to draft new Terms of Reference and draft a report to separate the roles and responsibilities of the Chair of the Council and a Town Mayor role. Councillor McAll offered to help with creating these reports in preparation for Annual Council Meeting on 9 May 2024.

Councillor McAll advised that he would be happy to work with Councillor Hughes and the Clerk in respect of the reports to the Annual Meeting.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Hughes work with the Clerk to draft a report and revised Terms of Reference for all Standing Committees, making use of the report that was provided to the Annual Council Meeting in May 2023.

Councillor Morris noted that there were two members of the public present at the meeting, and asked whether they would be given an opportunity to speak if they so wished. The Clerk advised that as this is a reconvened meeting of Council, the Public Participation item of the agenda had been dealt with at the original meeting held on 28 March 2024, therefore there was no opportunity for members of the public to speak at the meeting. However, if the members of the public wished to speak on an item on the agenda being considered they may be permitted to speak at the discretion of the Mayor.



C232. MEMBER/STAFF PROTOCOL

Councillor Hughes proposed that all recommendations in the Member/Staff Protocol report be accepted as practice and that the last sentence reading 'It should be accepted by Members that there are no exceptions to the above.' Should be included as a sixth bullet point.

Councillor Howells seconded the motion subject to requesting that a line be added to ensure that Council emails between Councillors be strictly kept for use of Council business only and that they should not be used for debate.

Councillor Morris queried what the benefits if this recommendation is accepted. He pointed out that all Councillors were very aware that all of the staff are incredibly overworked and committed to the work they have to undertake, in particular the Clerk and Deputy Clerk. Would these recommendations not mean that the Clerk and Deputy Clerk are going to have an increased workload.

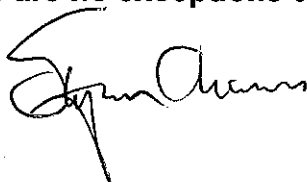
The Clerk advised that currently there are issues arising from these protocols not being adhered to by all Councillors which impact on the workload of the Clerk and Deputy Clerk. Junior officers are not always in possession of the most up-to-date information on council business which can result in the wrong information being provided with Councillors, which in turn creates an increase in the workload of senior officers in having to correct issues that arise from that.

Councillor Howells believed that the amendments to the protocol would reduce the workload of senior officers, adding that he believes Councillors have become very ill-disciplined and use and abuse the email system. He pointed out that these amendments will provide clear guidelines for responding to emails and contact from Councillors and make it clear that if Councillors do not follow this process then they may not get a response to their enquiries.

RESOLVED:

That the Member/Staff Protocol on Member be amended to include the following points:

- **That when contacting the office with an enquiry, Councillors MUST contact the Clerk, or the Deputy Clerk in their absence, in the first instance.**
- **If the Clerk or Deputy Clerk are unavailable, then the Councillor should either request that the Officer call them back or the Councillor should send an email with the details of their enquiry.**
- **That if the Clerk considers it appropriate the Councillor can be advised that they can speak directly to a member of staff.**
- **That all phone calls to the office should be made via the landline, unless informed that the officer is out of the office but contactable on their mobile.**
- **That all emails should be directed to the Clerk or Deputy Clerk in their absence in the first instance.**
- **There are no exceptions to the above.**



- That Council emails are not to be used for debate purposes and should be kept strictly to direct Council business.

The 2 members of the public left at 7:39pm.

C233. PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDER (PSO)

Councillor Hughes proposed that the recommendation in the Public Spaces Protection Order be accepted, Councillor McAll seconded the motion, and all members were in favour.

RESOLVED:

That the Clerk provide a response to Herefordshire Council to advise that Ledbury Town Council support the recommendations being put forward by Ward Councillors that the PSO be extended to include the Town Trail around Woodleigh Road/Back of New Street, St Katherine's Square and the area surround the Master's House.

C234. OFFICER REPORTS

- Town Clerk**
- Deputy Clerk**
- Community Development Officer**

RESOLVED:

That members receive and note the Officer Reports, with thanks.

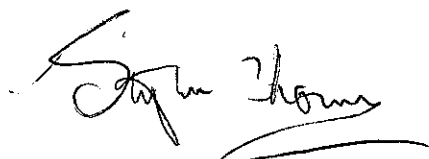
C235. OUTSIDE BODIES

RESOLVED:

- That the minutes of the meeting of Ledbury Stromstad Twinning Association held on 3 January 2024 were received with thanks.**
- That the minutes of the meeting of Ledbury Carnival Association held on 7 February and 6 March 2024 were received with thanks.**

C236. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To note that the next meeting of Council will be the Annual Council meeting scheduled for 9 May 2024.



C237. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED:

That In accordance with Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, it is advisable in the public interest that the press and public are excluded from the remainder of the meeting

C238. UPDATE ON HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL CCTV

The Clerk informed members that although Herefordshire Council CCTV staff had agreed to scheduling a meeting to discuss the CCTV in Ledbury, they had no outstanding updates to provide Ledbury Town Council with.

Members discussed the question that Herefordshire Council officers had asked:

'Does Ledbury Town Council want CCTV in their town and why?.'

Councillor Chowns stated that lives in other towns had been saved due to having CCTV and it would be wise to collect some statistics and evidence to support this when answering the above question. It was highlighted that the Safer Neighbourhood team have been able to identify people who have been taking part in anti-social behaviour by looking at the current CCTV footage.

Councillor Furlonger proposed that Ledbury Town Council respond to say yes in principle, Ledbury needs CCTV coverage and for this statement to be backed with statistics.

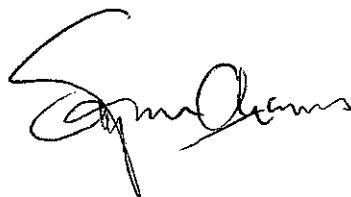
RESOLVED:

That the Clerk provide a response to Herefordshire Council stating that Ledbury Town Council agree that they do want CCTV in Ledbury in principle, but it would be beneficial to have some statistics as to how CCTV has benefited the Police to help to inform their decision.

C239. UPDATE ON MORTUARY LEASE

The Clerk informed members that she is awaiting a response on the solicitor with an update on the Mortuary Lease and that she would chase them for a response the next working day.

Councillor Hughes proposed that the Town Council chase a response from the solicitor before taking Section 25 Action in the first instance and if there is failure in this the Environment & Leisure Committee can put an alternate plan together to represent to Full Council. Councillor Howells seconded this, and all members were in favour.

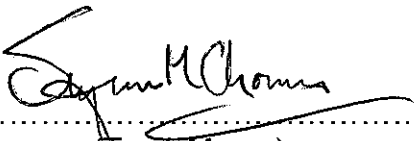


RESOLVED:

That the Clerk follow up with the Council's Solicitors in the first instance in respect of an update on the Mortuary Lease.

If no progress is made in respect of the Lease a report be submitted to the Environment & Leisure Committee will put together a plan to present at Full Council.

The meeting ended at 8:03pm.

Signed  Dated 13/5/2024
(Town Mayor)

