

LEOMINSTER TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Leominster Town Council Meeting held on Monday 27th July 2020 commencing at 19:00 hours remotely via Zoom.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillors Thomas (Mayor), Rumsey (Deputy Mayor), Bartlett, Davies, Marsh, Murdoch, Norman, Parris, Smith-Winnard, Sutcliffe, Williams and Williamson(19.47).

OFFICERS PRESENT: Town Clerk.

ALSO PRESENT: Ward Cllr Stone.

14/20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr. Preece (Work), Cllr Rosser (Work), Cllr Herschy (Prior Engagement), Cllr Marshall (Work)

15/20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr. Norman – LARC
Cllr. Sutcliffe – LARC, Farmers Market
Cllr. Murdoch - Allotments

16/20 REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

No requests for dispensation had been received.

17/20 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

No members of the public were present. No matters were raised.

18/20 END OF YEAR ACCOUNTS 2019/20

(a) **Annual Internal Audit Report** – Council noted the report.

(b) **Annual Governance Statement** – Council considered the Annual Governance Statement presented and **RESOLVED** to formally adopt the Annual Governance Statement for 2019/20.

The Statement was duly signed by the Mayor and Clerk/RFO.

(c) **Annual End of Year Accounts** – Council considered the 2019/20 End of Year accounts presented.

Following a review of the accounts it was **RESOLVED** to formally approve the 2019/20 End of Year accounts.

The Accounts were duly signed by the Mayor and Clerk/RFO.

19/20 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Council **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Leominster Town Council meeting held on 18th May 2020 be agreed and signed as a correct record when social distancing regulations are lifted by central government.

20/20 CLERK'S REPORT

Council noted the following Clerk's Report:

- (a) That the decision to proceed with Leominster High Street Heritage Action Zone programme has now been signed off by Herefordshire Council and that a steering group of Herefordshire Council representatives (4), Town Council representatives (4) and Community Representatives (4) along with Historic England and professional representatives would need to be set up. It was suggested in the original document that Leominster Town Council representatives should be as follows:-

- Town Clerk
- Projects and Grants Officer
- Mayor
- Chair of the Communications & Events Committee

Cllr. Thomas proposed the suggestion and added that Cllr. Bartlett be added to the list as reserve member to deputise for any of the above. This was seconded by Cllr. Williams, unanimously agreed and **RESOLVED** to appoint the above mentioned and forward the names of the representatives to Herefordshire Council.

That the revised job descriptions for senior staff were currently being drawn up ahead of the senior staff appraisals.

That the COVID-19 Emergency Plan would be part of RR8 on the Risk Register.

That the Citizens Advice Bureau is currently assessing video appointments with a view to moving to 'in person' appointments later in the year. The Town Council staff would be able to make referrals due to the increase in uptake as the Furlough Scheme winds down.

- (b) **Meeting dates for the remainder of the calendar year** – Committee considered the table of meeting dates and **RESOLVED** to adopt them.
- (c) **Personnel sub-committee to carry out the clerk's appraisal** – the Personnel Sub – Committee **RESOLVED** meet on Wednesday 19th August at 2pm and carry out the clerk's appraisal after the meeting.

21/20 COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Council approved the minutes of the following meetings held and ratified the decisions and recommendations made:

- Cllr Williams, Vice-Chair of the Planning & Highways Committee, presented the minutes. It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the Planning & Highways Committee held on 1st June 2020, 22nd June 2020 and 13th July 2020 and to authorise the decisions and recommendations contained therein;
- Cllr Rumsey, Chair of the Communications & Events Committee, presented the minutes. It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the Communications & Events Committee held on 12th May 2020 and to authorise the decisions and recommendations contained therein;

- Cllr Murdoch, Chair of the Finance & General Purposes Committee, presented the minutes. It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held on 29th June 2020 and to authorise the decisions and recommendations contained therein;
- Cllr. Thomas, Chair of the Personnel Sub-Committee, presented the minutes. It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the Personnel Sub-Committee held on 6th May 2020 and to authorise the decisions and recommendations contained therein;
- Cllr Smith-Winnard, Chair of the Environment & Services Committee, presented the minutes. It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the Environment & Services Committee held 11th May 2020 and to authorise the decisions and recommendations contained therein.

22/20 FINANCES

- (a) **Accounts Paid and Invoices for Payment** – It was **RESOLVED** to ratify the payment of invoices for June/July 2020, as outlined on the payment statement provided.
- (b) **Risk Register** – The updated Governance and Management Risk Register was presented by the clerk and it was **RESOLVED** to formally adopt the revised Risk Register 2020/21.

23/20 REPORTS

The following reports were received:

- (a) **Cllr Bartlett – Community Centre Verbal Report** – The council noted the report including that the Community Centre has planned its first socially distanced meeting for 1st September 2020, the therapists are returning to the health centre and that training had been taking place at the Community Centre.
- (b) **Cllr. Rumsey – Shopmobility Verbal Report** – Then council noted that Shopmobility is still closed as a result of COVID-19 pandemic. An emergency number is available and displayed at the premises and outside operation is currently being considered.

Leominster West Ward Report

Report from Councillor Felicity Norman (Cabinet portfolio – Children and Families)

Covid 19 continues to dominate our lives, but things are gradually beginning to ease, with shops and pubs opening, although with strict rules on distancing, wearing masks etc. It is lovely to see people sitting outside cafes in Corn Square, and to have the Friday market getting busier each week. The temporary introduction of 20mph speed limits and the exclusion of cars in the centre of town for a few hours each day, will make it much easier and safer for people to get around and to queue outside shops.

The partnership of community volunteers, Leominster town council and Herefordshire Council are still supporting those who need help with shopping, collection of medication or just a friendly chat, while the food bank continues to

provide much needed food parcels for the increasing number of those on low incomes, due to job losses or low wages. As ever, difficult times bring out the best in most people, and our strong, local community has risen to the occasion to make sure everyone is supported. Well done to everyone.

Schools have just closed for the summer holidays, and for many this will be the first well-earned break since the crisis began, as they continued to stay open during the Easter and half term holidays, to provide support for the children of key worker and those who are vulnerable. They have done an amazing job for which we are all hugely grateful. As well as teaching on-line, this has included helping social workers and family support workers in keeping in touch with children with care plans, who often need extra support, both virtual and in real time. We were all relieved when the Government changed its mind, and decided to provide Free School Meals throughout the summer holiday for who meet the threshold of need.

The Covid 19 outbreak among the pickers at the vegetable Farm at Mathon has caused considerable concern, both for those infected and for the wider community. This has been handled extremely efficiently by Public Health England, our own Public Health director, Herefordshire Council and the police. As it is the first such case in the country, it is being followed with interest at the national level, who are learning from our local example.

Herefordshire Council continues to encourage staff to work from home, and to have its meetings on-line, and will continue to do so in the future. The majority of those working for the Council have indicated a preference for working this way, and it reduces travel and the need for unnecessary office space, ultimately cutting overheads.

So much has changed during the last few months, including quieter roads, and appreciation of the seasonal changes, of birdsong, of the wildlife around us, and of our beautiful countryside. I hope that enjoying these will go some way to compensate for the anxiety and loneliness that many will still be feeling, along with the friendliness and support that our strong community provides.

Ward Issues

Continuing phosphate problems with the River Lugg mean that many planning applications are still on hold, including the poultry house application at Stagbatch Farm, and the large development at Barons Cross Camp. Many of us were very relieved when McDonalds withdrew their planning application on the site near Morrisons, as the increase of traffic it would have generated on an already very busy road, was causing great concern.

The fly tipping on the Barons Cross Camp site, and on the side of the A44 (Monkland Road) has been dealt with, but unless these areas are properly fenced off, it is likely to build up again.

Leominster North & Rural Ward Report

Council noted this report and Cllr. John Stone added that the potholes on Mill Street had been filled and that Balfour Beatty had been contacted regarding the footway gully opposite the old Hop Pole public house. Resurfacing on A49 continues and a new garage with shop had been built near Brimfield.

Cllr. Stone also reminded council of the forthcoming VJ Day on 15th August and hoped that it could be commemorated with a church service if current restrictions are lifted further.

Leominster South Ward Report

Herefordshire has so far had low rates of infection, but still has had over 100 deaths, around half in care homes. The recent outbreak among seasonal workers near Cradley shows how quickly things can change – and why face coverings, which are compulsory in shops from this Friday, seem like a small and sensible way for us to protect each other.

We hope the networks built during the outbreak will continue to provide ways for us to keep in contact and support each other. Talk Communities, a Herefordshire Council initiative, will be building on our own and many other networks throughout the county.

As well as a Facebook 'Cllr Trish Marsh' page I've set up a page called 'Leominster Independent Shops' to give some publicity to our many and varied local businesses. It tracks the many re-openings that we have had. So many things we hadn't realised we valued so much till they weren't there. Like the Priory bells - just back. Most shops in towns are now open again and we are just starting to see the return of the charity shops. Grange Court has just reopened and the Community Centre are due to start reopening soon but sadly the Museum is not able to reopen this year. Leominster in Bloom have provided a fantastic backdrop for the town, which has really lifted spirits.

Leominster Foodbank has been both very well supported and immensely busy. They have distributed many Free School Meal bags on top of greater other demands. In addition they have provided regular Foodshares, which are open to all without the need for a referral. Leominster's food waste must have reduced substantially! Their volunteers have put in so many hours in a physically demanding and fast moving situation.

The debate on of how to combine easy access by car to the town centre and safe distancing for shoppers has been lively for the last month, with much discussion with local businesses. Narrow streets and pavements combined with queues, high kerbs and traffic makes it impossible for shoppers to keep even 1 metre apart safely. The temporary traffic orders are due in shortly and will help make space by pedestrianising High Street and Corn Square from 10am – 1pm from Monday to Saturday. They will also include a central 20mph zone which runs all the way to the Primary School. The measures can be adjusted as necessary in response to feedback. There are still many free and cheap parking spaces within 50 metres of the town centre and Shopmobility can provide aids on request.

Fortunately Herefordshire Council has found that remote working works well, both for individuals, teams and councillors and we have had very low rates of staff absence. Staff have been redeployed to act as link workers across the county and enforcement teams have been working with the police. We have had weekly meetings of ward Cllrs with our link workers and the town council. There has been concerted work with care homes on providing PPE and containing infection, which was exacerbated by the national decision to discharge hospital patients to homes without testing for Covid. Many grants to businesses have been distributed. More recently the Council has led on containing the farm outbreak among seasonal workers, without whom our crops could not be picked.

But Herefordshire Council's resources have been stretched by both the flooding and Covid and by no means all its expenditure will be replaced by central government. Income has also been dented by the business rate holiday and free parking. So the Council is well out of pocket and is currently working hard on how to address this. Sadly it is likely this will require further economies just at the time when many of our

residents and businesses are also facing financial struggles. However the capital programme is set to continue, taking advantage of the very low rate for borrowing. Free parking in Leominster comes to an end this Saturday – but an hour is only 50p in Etnam St car park and free on-street parking remains. We hope the new traffic measures and the face coverings in shops rule will reassure many who live in and around our market town that it is safe to venture back into Leominster and enjoy all it has to offer. So many people have worked hard together. Thank you all. The summer and autumn will bring new challenges. Let's keep working even more closely to find ways through.

Trish Marsh

Leominster East Ward members report 27th July 2020

First of all let me say a big thank you to our clerk and town council teams who are working so hard through these months of covid-19, they and all our community groups are amazing. Weekly Talk Community meetings with our Herefordshire Council appointed Link Worker, fellow Ward members and Town Council officers has been really useful in understanding how the local and central responses work together, particularly with partners like the food bank.

I have really appreciated getting back to the Friday Market and the monthly Farmers Markets and I am really pleased to see the rest of our town coming out of lock down. This last Friday the town was really buzzing again and Central and Etnam Street car parks were full and Corn Square was bursting with people. A big thank you to our Deputy Mayor, Cllr John Rumsey for helping out so cheerfully on our Friday markets every week too.

The Temporary Traffic Orders will be important in allowing people to queue, talk and safely distance by using the road space. I see the sense in the latest tweaks to the order, removing West Street from the temporary list of short traffic closures and acknowledge there are still mixed views on all this. Removing traffic for the three hours in the day between 10 am and 1pm will give people more space without detracting from business still having the majority of the day for deliveries and collections. I welcome the fact that there will be continuous monitoring of the impact for the duration, which can only be 18 months at the very longest.

I have been very involved in the two recent parish on line meetings held recently. The Market Town Economic Investment Plan meetings was well attended by all towns and I was pleased to be able to include Market Town Parish Council Teams in the initial meeting, rather than just holding a Ward Members briefing. Within the current capital programme, £14 million has been identified to support the development of employment land and business space in the market towns. It was also great to hear from the market town parishes that they are determined to restart their own Market Town Forum meetings again soon.

The Parish Summit was another milestone for us, with over one hundred signing up to a virtual summit. As with many huge aspirations there were a few teething problems but overall there has been some positive feedback and a desire to hold parish meetings more often. The outbreak at Mathon has brought home the fact that we are still in a pandemic. So it was good to hear from Karen Wright, Public Health England about the Outbreak Control Plan and how parishes will work with Herefordshire Council and Public Health England, should the need arise.

I am involved in the newly forming Herefordshire Mental Health Advisory Board. From the beginning of April this year Herefordshire is now in partnership with Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust to deliver mental health services across the county. The advisory board is open to members who represent stakeholders, community groups and individuals involved with mental health issues, so it is a really exciting opportunity to define what we want as a county and at a local level.

The Core Strategy review is generating some work for us now and I spent a lot of time filing in the Neighbourhood Planning Hierarchy submission together with the Town Clerk. To better understand the town we have put together a basic business register of the town centre, which we used for the first time when Licensing asked for our help to get their Covid-19 advice on opening and pavement licence letters out. I am now working on the Affordable Housing Draft Supplementary Planning Document. I attended a timely online members brief on sustainable building and the core strategy and how we can seek to influence good design and sustainable practices in the county, something that is very important to all of us. I have also attended two online LGA Conference seminars on Re-thinking Local and Spot light on learning through crisis.
Cllr. Jenny Bartlett

- (c) **Website Report** – Councillors noted the website report and were shown an example of a compliant website on screen. It was **RESOLVED** that the Clerk should supply further information and that a small task and finish group be set up to compare quotes and requirements, review the budget and make a decision on a new website provider.

24/20 MAYORAL APPOINTMENTS

Council noted the following Mayoral appointments attended by the Mayor and Deputy Mayor.

- The Mayor and Deputy Mayor attended the first Farmers Market since the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown on 13th June 2020.
- The Mayor and Deputy Mayor supported the reopening of general shops in the town on 15th June by promoting the reopening and talking to local businesses.
- The Mayor and Deputy Mayor met St. John's Ambulance cadets outside the Town Council Offices at 10pm on 24th June, when the building was lit in green to celebrate St. John's Day.

25/20 ELECTION OF TOWN MAYOR AND DEPUTY MAYOR FOR 2021/22 CIVIC YEAR

Nominations were invited for the position of Mayor 2021/22.

Cllr. Rumsey was proposed by Cllr. Thomas and seconded by Cllr. Bartlett. No other nominations were received.

It was unanimously **RESOLVED** that Cllr. Rumsey be elected Mayor of Leominster for 2021/22.

Nominations were invited for the position of Deputy Mayor 2021/22.

Cllr Marsh was proposed by Cllr. Murdoch and seconded by Cllr. Norman. No other nominations were received. It was unanimously **RESOLVED** that Cllr. Marsh be elected Deputy Mayor of Leominster for 2021/22.

26/20 MOTION

Leominster Town Council Motion to **support the Herefordshire Council Motion to move to 20mph in the county's residential areas** was proposed by Cllr. Norman and seconded by Cllr. Williams.

Leominster Town Council requests that Herefordshire Council undertakes to implement 20mph speed limits across Herefordshire's towns and major villages.

This was proposed by Cllr. Sutcliffe and seconded by Cllr Davies. The motion was put to vote and agreed unanimously:

For: 12 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

Cllr. Stone left the meeting at 8.31pm.

27/20 CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

As certain items to be discussed included the consideration of exempt information, Full Council **RESOLVED** that, in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded during the discussion of the matters referred to in the items listed below, on the grounds that they would involve the likely disclosure of exempt information, as defined in the respective paragraph of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, and the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

(a) Verbal Staff update from the Clerk's Report – Council noted the update and will receive a further update when the Clerk has spoken to Ellis Whittam and ACAS.

28/20 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Council noted that the next Town Council Meeting would be held on Monday 28th September 2020 commencing at 19:00 hours either remotely via Zoom or at the Council Offices, 11 Corn Square, Leominster HR6 8YP depending on social distancing regulations being relaxed by central government.

There being no other business the Mayor thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting at 20:45pm.

MAYOR _____ **DATE:** _____