

MINUTES OF THE
ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

of BROMYARD AND WINSLOW

held on Wednesday 26th May 2021 at 7pm.

Due to COVID restrictions (limits on indoor gatherings etc), the meeting was held on the Town Green, next to the Public Hall, Rowberry St., Bromyard.

UNTIL NEXT TOWN MEETING, THESE MINUTES HAVE NOT BEEN RATIFIED

PRESENT: Cllr. Suzette Brunson (Chairman of the meeting), Cllrs Gill Churchill, Fred Clark, Ann Collingwood, Clare Davies, Dee Dunne-Thomas, Mark Franklin, David James, Lisa Law and Michael Stevens

In attendance: K Mitchell, Town Clerk

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting.

21/01 Apologies:

Cllr Nigel Shaw - Herefordshire Councillor – Bromyard East ward.

21/02 Minutes:

The Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 15th April 2019 were approved by all present and signed by the Chairman of the Council as a true and accurate record.

21/03 Chairman's Report: Cllr S Brunson

The Chairman explained that there had been no Annual Town Meeting in the previous year due to the Covid-19 pandemic which had dominated much of 2020 and early 2021. The Town Council had been unable to meet in person during this time, but the introduction of emergency legislation had allowed the Council to continue its work by meeting and making decisions virtually via videoconferencing technology.

The Chairman gave an update on repairs at the HALO Centre, advising that works were due to be completed by the end of July, beginning of August. Once opened, the centre will become the new home for the Food Bank.

21/04 Chair of Committees' Reports:

Finance & Properties - Cllr Mark Franklin

The Chairman of the Finance & Properties Committee gave a report covering the years 2019-20 to 2020-21. Full report attached to the Minutes.

Planning & Economic Development - Cllr Gill Churchill

The Chairman of the Planning & Economic Development gave a report on the work of the Committee. Full report attached to the Minutes.

Burial - Cllr Dee Dunne-Thomas

The Chairman of the Burial Committee reported that only 8 new double depth grave plots remained in the last row of the existing burial area. Following a ground study survey, a small number of potential new single depth plots had been identified on the upper bank of the cemetery adjacent to the existing cremation plots. The Committee continues to search for land for a new burial ground in the parish.

Ideas were being considered for a memorial to commemorate the unmarked graves where occupants of the poor house had been buried.

Traffic Management – Cllr Fred Clark

The Chairman of the Traffic Management Committee reported on the work of the Committee since its formation in January 2020.

Preliminary plans had been drawn up by Herefordshire Council for proposed improvements to the layout of the junction/pedestrian crossing next to the Post Office in Church Street.

The Committee is working with the Police/Community Speed Watch to investigate the possibility of speed cameras and setting up of a Speed Monitoring Group.

Staffing - Cllr Clare Davies

The Chairman of the Staffing Committee reported that in line with government guidance, staff had been working from home during the covid pandemic but were beginning a phased return to work in the office. Having been short-staffed for a prolonged period, the Council had committed to undertake an operational review of its committees and staffing structure.

21/05 Comments and Questions from any Elector of the parish.

None.

The meeting closed at 7.25pm

TOWN MEETING – MAY 26 2021

REPORT OF THE FINANCE AND PROPERTIES COMMITTEE - BROMYARD AND WINSLOW TOWN COUNCIL

No Town Meeting was held in 2020 because of lockdown. This report therefore covers the years 2019-20 and 2020-21.

The Finance and Properties Committee, reporting to the Council, takes the lead in ensuring that the Council's financial reporting systems and internal control systems are of good quality and properly maintained. It advises the Council on the appointment of both internal and external auditors and reviews their reports, making recommendations to Council as necessary, including changes in procedures where appropriate. No matters of concern as to the accuracy of the Council's financial records or the adequacy of its financial procedures have been raised by internal or external auditors during the period of this report..

The Committee is responsible for ensuring that all Council expenditures are correctly approved and in accordance with Council policies and decisions. To this end, the Committee scrutinised all invoices and payment records for 2019-20 and 2020-21. For 2019-20, the Committee also reviewed monthly accounts each month, comparing income and expenditure by category and obtaining explanations for significant variances. Since the beginning of lockdown in March 2020, meetings have moved online and accounts reviewed less frequently but no less thoroughly, and at least quarterly. A significant part of the Committee's responsibilities is to ensure that the Council obtains good value for money when ordering goods and services and that competitive quotations are obtained as may be required and this process was maintained throughout the period.

The Committee takes decisions and makes recommendations to Council over the development and maintenance of the Council's property portfolio. This includes the Rowberry Street Complex comprising the Old Vicarage, Heritage Centre, Car Park and Town Green. A professional condition report covering the Old Vicarage and the Heritage Centre was received in 2017-18 and work on dealing with its recommendations requires a multi-year program of repairs and maintenance. Progression of these works has been hampered by the pandemic but essential works have been carried out. Significant works that have been completed include the refurbishment of the public toilets on the Tenbury Road Car Park, the replacement of the ticket machines on the Council car parks, a new flag pole and improvements to the Council's IT systems. The Committee also takes the lead in ensuring the adequacy of insurance cover and on health and safety matters, liaising with our external advisors.

The Committee prepared annual budgets for 2020-21 and 2021-22 with accompanying precept recommendations which were subsequently approved by full Council. These resulted in a minimal increase in precept for 2020-21 and a zero precept increase for 2021-22. In arriving at these budgets recommendations, the Committee examined in detail the forecast income and expenditure items to ensure that the budgets were realistic and achievable and would ensure that funds were available to maintain Council services in the face of expected cost pressures while seeking reductions in costs where possible, and to ensure the maintenance of reserves adequate to meet the unexpected. The Committee and Council were anxious to achieve a zero precept increase for 2021-22 so as to assist the recovery from Covid of the local economy. We were helped in this by having healthy reserves which may be needed in future as Herefordshire Council responds to the cost pressures that it faces.

Cllr M Franklin
Committee Chairman

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING – 26TH MAY 2021

REPORT OF THE PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

I would firstly like to thank former Councillor Roger Page for all his hard work, knowledge and enthusiasm over many years as Chairman of the Planning & Economic Development Committee and wish him well in his retirement.

The Planning & Economic Development Committee, like all the other Council committees have experienced a very different twelve months due to the COVID 19 pandemic. We have been meeting regularly via Zoom on the first Monday of each month and also on an ad-hoc basis when necessary to discuss new planning applications.

It must be noted that we are not a decision making committee; we are consulted by Herefordshire Council on all planning applications for Bromyard and Winslow. During the previous twelve months there have been no new houses approved due to the ongoing problem in the Lugg catchment area of excess nitrates and phosphates and until this problem is solved by Welsh Water and Herefordshire Council the restrictions will be in force. Having said that, we have been consulted on the following plans: 3 agricultural dwellings, many extensions and house improvements, shop signage, an attenuation pond, the list goes on!

Due to the nitrate problems, the Gladmans and Bovis developments are on hold but it does not prevent them from applying for permission to build at a later date. The development on the old council depot site on the A465, originally passed by Herefordshire Council, is now not taking place due to opposition from this council and landowners affected. The Ashfield site for a proposed 102 houses is now out of time.

As there is no Neighbourhood Development Plan for Bromyard, it falls upon Herefordshire Council to prepare a Bromyard Area Development Plan, however, we are still awaiting news on where they propose to site 5 hectares of employment land. Herefordshire Council has now delayed or put on hold their decision until they deliver their update of the Core Strategy where elements of the Bromyard Development will be incorporated.

Cllr Gill Churchill
Committee Chairman