

Droitwich Spa Town Council

MINUTES of the meeting of Droitwich Spa Town Council held in the Council Chamber, St. Richard's House, Victoria Square, Droitwich Spa on **Monday 23 April 2018** at 6.00pm.

PRESENT: Councillor S Best (Mayor)
Councillor R G Beale
Councillor Mrs C Bowden
Councillor G R Brookes
Councillor G A Duffy
Councillor L Evans
Councillor A Humphries
Councillor A H Laird
Councillor R J Morris
Councillor W T Moy
Councillor R E Murphy
Councillor T J Noyes
Councillor A Roberts
Councillor Ms J Bolton
Councillor Mrs S Harris

APOLOGIES for absence: Councillor A M Sinton.

PUBLIC QUESTIONS SESSION

No questions were submitted for consideration.

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290 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Councillor RJ Morris declared a non-prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 8 for the Neighbourhood Plan update as Chairman of the Neighbourhood Planning Group.
Councillor WT Moy declared a non-prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 9 for the Brine Heritage update as Chairman of the SOBBS Group.

291 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF COUNCIL HELD ON 29 JANUARY 2018

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Meeting of Council held on 29 January 2018 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

292 MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councillor S Best introduced and welcomed Miss Sharon Abbott the newly appointed Assistant Town Clerk – Community & Amenities. Councillor Best then reported upon recent events that he had attended, including the Chateau Impney concert in aid of the Help the Heroes Charity on 21 April 2018. Mention was also made of the forthcoming

event to be hosted at the Old Cock Inn on Saturday 28 April to mark the end of his Mayoral year and the forthcoming St Richards Festival weekend taking place on the 5, 6 & 7 May 2018. Councillor Best also congratulated Droitwich Spa Rugby Club on the team's second consecutive year's qualification to playoffs at Twickenham.

293 TO RECEIVE A BRIEF UPDATE ON POLICING IN DROITWICH SPA

The Chairman welcomed Sergeant Sarah Kent to the meeting. Sergeant Kent reported upon burglaries and thefts that had occurred in the period since her last report.

Two notable incidents in April included theft of a bank card leading to unauthorised cash withdrawals from a vulnerable adult residing in Meadow Court and two break in's on Amphlett Way. These comprised one unsuccessful attempted burglary and a theft of car keys leading to a car later being stolen from a driveway. Theft from motor vehicles had reduced following the arrest and imprisonment of two main offenders recently. Isolated anti- social behaviour incidents continued to be encountered including eggs being thrown at property and people walking on parked vehicles after dark. Under partnership working a recent success story followed collaboration with Fortis Housing to serve an injunction on an individual to keep away from an address where drug trafficking activity had been investigated. Sergeant Kent advised that despite these incidents the town remained a safe place,

The advantages of signing up to the Community Messaging Service for regular Neighbourhood Watch updates through email and face book applications was explained and encouraged. To conclude Sergeant Kent updated that her role had recently changed to cover the whole of the Wychavon District Area although this will have no detrimental impact on the continued work of her team in Droitwich Spa. The Mayor thanked Sergeant Kent for her informative report.

294 HIGH SCHOOL – UPDATE FROM HEAD GIRL AND HEAD BOY

Francesca Hawkeswood, Deputy Head Girl and Taylor Charrington, Deputy Head Boy were welcomed to the meeting. Francesca and Taylor advised that they were new to their roles as were the Head Boy and Head Girl. They updated about various school trips including a group of 48 students visiting New York over the February half term, 82 year 9 students visiting Paris over Easter and a successful trip to Geneva visiting the Hadron Collider and the UN Building. Approximately 70 year 9 students had also visited the Imperial War Museum and there had been two trips to the RSC Theatre at Stratford Up-on Avon. Other news included plans progressing for a spring musical concert, pupil -Jade Mosley becoming a member of the Droitwich Arts Network, the school achieving second place in a Regional swimming competition and £1 million being raised towards improvements to the school heating system comprising the bottom half of the campus.

Councillor TJ Noyes, Councillor Mrs Bowden and the Mayor all thanked Francesca and Taylor for reporting upon the activities at the school so well.

295 YOUTH COUNCIL – UPDATE FROM YOUTH COUNCILLORS

Katie Bowen representing the Youth Council provided a report updating that plans were well underway to collaborate with Droitwich Arts Network working on a "Summer Showcase" for music at the High School on 14 July 2018 and also parts of

the Town Centre Summer Arts Festival during July. Arrangements were also reported to be planning an outdoor cinema event featuring support from the Wychavon Youth Bus at the High School in September. Katie advised that further information will follow as plans are finalised for these activities and projects. On other matters Katie updated that Youth Council membership was increasing with new interest received from West Acre Middle School and that input was also being provided to the Neighbourhood Plan Group for youth subjects in the town. Councillor Noyes and the Mayor thanked Katie for her informative report.

296 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING GROUP [NPG] – UPDATE REPORT

The Town Clerk reported that the Town Council had adopted the recommended Wychavon District Council data protection policy on 9 April 2018 ready for the new requirements effective from 25 May 2018. This policy had been sent to the Neighbourhood Planning Group on 10 April 2018 to adopt as their members would be representing the Town Council for consultation purposes going forward. To support this a list of members was requested from the NHP Group to be received by 1 May 2018 together with a strategy for updating any new membership.

Councillor RJ Morris presented the Neighbourhood Planning Groups fifth report. He also drew attention to the initial report received from Mr Peter Hamilton- Consultant. Councillor Humphries read out the following statement.

“I attended the meeting of the Neighbourhood Plan Group last Thursday. Firstly, I would like to remind Council that I seconded the motion that set up the group in September 2016 as I believed in the concept of the plan and felt that the town would benefit from having one. I still believe this and have no reason to think that I made the wrong decision then and still support the concept now. To be clear, it has and continues to have my full support. I also completely supported the view that this Council needed to become more involved in the operation of the group notwithstanding the original motion stating that there would be no use of either physical or financial Council resources to support it. However, I believe the role of this Council as a whole and myself as an individual is to act as a “critical friend” to the Neighbourhood Plan Group and the meeting last week left me with some concerns. I had expected the group to be at a more advanced stage in the process than it is at the moment and that is in no way a reflection on the extremely committed individuals who are currently working on the project who have clearly worked very hard and I have my own first-hand knowledge of how difficult it can be to get people involved in something no matter how good the aim is. That said, judging by the turnout last week, I remain to be convinced the majority of the town either know of the Plan or want one as I am hearing the view it will happen anyway with or without any input from the majority of people. I also do not think the meeting itself would have encouraged more people to become involved in the Planning Group as I felt, with few exceptions, this was broadly a repeat of the meeting I attended at St Andrew’s Church in October 2016. I would have expected more information concerning the aims and objectives of the group as well as those of individual sub groups and a clear definable strategy of the group. Also, I would have expected to see more details concerning what the sub groups have done so far and what their future plans are and how that feeds into the group’s overall strategy.

I was also concerned that there seemed to be an implication that the appointment of the Consultant had in some way delayed the Neighbourhood Plan process when this appointment was designed to help the group when it was struggling at a financial cost to the Council. Also, there seemed to be a lack of acknowledgement of the size of the task being undertaken following the Consultant's initial recommendations.

Finally, having read the Consultant's initial recommendations, there is a clear expectation that Council resources will be needed on top of the financial commitment we will need to meet from the contracting of the Consultant.

With this in mind, I would like, through you Mayor, to ask the Chair of the Neighbourhood Plan Group if he would kindly provide this council with the following information by the next Full Council Meeting or, if possible, sooner:-

- 1. A clear statement of the Steering Group's aims and objectives/terms of reference and overall strategy.*
- 2. A clear statement of each of the Sub Group's aims and objectives/terms of reference and how that fits into the overall strategy.*
- 3. A clear statement of exactly how the Steering Group intends to contact local groups, businesses and individuals to gather the information recommended by the Consultant and how this information will then be extrapolated and utilised.*
- 4. An acceptance that no more financial or physical resources will be available from the Town Council for the Neighbourhood Plan Group.*
- 5. An undertaking that the Group will work to deadlines outlined in the Consultant's initial recommendations.*
- 6. An undertaking that this council will be provided with weekly updates on the progress that the Group is making.*

I am aware that what I am asking may not be received well by some members of the Group, however, I wish to reiterate my commitment to the Neighbourhood Plan and the work of the Steering Group and wanting to support the Plan's implementation; my remarks and requests should not be seen as criticism and/or an objection to the Plan but more a wish to help where possible and to protect the reputation and integrity of all individuals involved in the Groups as well as that of this Council."

Councillor A Humphries proposed points 1 to 6 as outlined for the Neighbourhood Planning Group to provide for the Town Council. This was seconded by Councillor Brookes with all in favour. One amendment was agreed under point six for monthly progress reports rather than weekly. Councillor RJ Morris stated that the meeting the previous week was intended to bring new members on board as there had been fewer attendees of late due to a number of reasons, not least cancelled meetings as we introduce the consultant. He also stressed that much work had been completed and that the consultant recognised this. The volunteers had done a great job.

RESOLVED That the points 1 to 6 as outlined by Councillor A Humphries be requested from the Neighbourhood Planning Group with immediate effect during continued progression of the work.

297 BRINE HERITAGE GROUP – UPDATE REPORT

Councillor RJ Morris as Chairman of the Brine Heritage Group updated from his report [*circulated with the agenda*]. Councillor WT Moy responded and read out the following statement.

“I would like to thank Councillor Morris for his Brine Heritage Group update but I am moved to ask the question- What since its inception some years ago has the group itself achieved?”

Firstly salt production- The Droitwich Salt Co was formed by Councillor Brookes with I believe 3 directors. Councillor Brookes arranged for a brine tap to be fitted at Tower Hill and for brine to be tested for human consumption. Patrick Davis carried out the promotional work and negotiated with Churchfield’s in order to facilitate production. The Salt Co was then wound up and control handed to Churchfield’s, and salt production resumed after a gap of some 100 years.

Then on to the Brine Baths. When the Brine Heritage Group was formed I, along with other members of SOBBS attended some of the initial meetings where we gave a presentation of the vision of SOBBS. Although the presentation was well received we were told that the brine baths was not a priority at that time and such things as Brine trails and the promotion of Droitwich Salt and brine to include a brine flotation tester tank would eventually lead to the re-instatement of the brine baths proper. I insisted that the brine baths was the jewel in the crown for Droitwich Spa and SOBBS continued its work without support from BHG. Now you state in your introduction section b that given SOBBS have submitted a planning application for brine baths in Lido Park, you see the brine baths as the flagship for your heritage offer. Given that statement, I would like to ask the following, - as Chairman of the heritage group and portfolio holding Wychavon District Councillor, have you on behalf of Droitwich Town Council and SOBBS queried WDC on the following points

- 1. Why are WDC appearing to be unsympathetic towards the SOBBS planning application?*
- 2. Was it completely necessary to force SOBBS to spend in excess of £3000.00 on reports for what at this stage is merely a red outline application?*
- 3. Why has the application not yet gone to WDC planning committee*
- 4. Finally given that Town Council instructed our Town Clerk to write to WDC asking for their support in this matter, why have WDC not responded in any way?*

In conclusion, I think it unfair for me to expect a full response to my comments, but I do feel that BHG should be more proactive in this case if SOBBS are to achieve its ultimate goal”.

Councillor RJ Morris responded and helped clarify that for point 4 a letter had been received from Mr Jack Hegarty, Managing Director, Wychavon District Council dated 27 February 2018. This letter explained that it would not be appropriate for Wychavon to attend the Town Council to discuss the planning application W/17/02092/OUT until such time that it had been determined by the planning department. The Town Clerk confirmed that position had also been explained at the Town Council liaison meeting with Wychavon by Mr Hegarty on the 26 February 2018. The original letter was circulated by email to all Town Councillors by the previous Town Clerk on the 7 March 2018. The New Town Clerk committed to resend the letter to all Town Councillors for confirmation the next morning on 24 April 2018. Councillor TJ Noyes added that the planning procedure was complicated and this may account for some of the delays with the application not being called to committee at Wychavon planning so far. Councillor Morris refuted the criticism of him and Wychavon and stressed that he was strongly advocating the reintroduction of the Brine Baths with the Executive Board and Officers at Wychavon. He also agreed it would be the jewel for a tourism offer. Councillor Morris concluded by emphasising that Wychavon is a forward thinking and excellent Council.

Further debate continued without any additional proposals put forward. Councillor Brookes stated that greater support and assistance was being sought from Wychavon in

dealing with the progression of the planning application for SOBBS With no further proposal Councillor Best closed the debate and moved the meeting on to the next agenda item.

297 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE HELD ON 12 FEBRUARY 2018

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Planning Committee held on 12 February 2018 be approved and adopted.

298 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD ON 12 FEBRUARY 2018

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Resources Committee held on 12 February 2018 be approved and adopted.

299 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE HELD ON 5 MARCH 2018

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Planning Committee held on 5 March 2018 be approved and adopted.

300 MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY & AMENITIES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 5 MARCH 2018

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Community & Amenities Committee held on 5 March 2018 be approved and adopted.

301 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD ON 5 MARCH 2018

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Resources Committee held on 5 March 2018 be approved and adopted.

302 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE HELD ON 9 APRIL 2018

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Planning Committee held on 9 April 2018 be approved and adopted.

303 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD ON 9 APRIL 2018

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Resources Committee held on 9 April 2018 be approved and adopted.

304 COUNTY COUNCIL MATTERS

1. REPORTS ON COUNTY COUNCIL MATTERS

County Councillor G R Brookes reported on the following points:

- a) Worcestershire currently has some of the best maintained roads in the UK. Maintenance issues including pothole repairs can be reported on the WCC Hub or through the Town Clerks office for assistance.
- b) New signs would be in place shortly to help facilitate temporary road closures for the High Street during town festivals and events. It was explained that this would save money previously used to fund external contractors to implement closure and diversion signage.
- c) That the area of common road adjacent the Health Centre and pedestrian underpass off Ombersley Street was being improved. Measures included new road markings, pedestrian signs and some resurfacing.
- d) Concerns about housing developments taking place at Pulley Lane and Yew Tree Hill. Problems had been caused by land and soil being moved that did not accord with the planning consent which in turn was causing surface water run off on to Isaac Way.
- e) That the County Council was looking to adopt the Impney Way and Impney Green roads for which the developers did not originally have full ownership.
- f) That Divisional Fund monies had been made available to various groups and events including SOBBS, the Summer Arts Festival and the Food & Drink Festival.

County Councillor R J Morris advised:

- g) Under the Pulley Lane development that Wychavon Planning were continuing their investigation work.
- h) That Divisional Fund monies had been made available to various groups, events and projects including DCVS, Westlands Community Hall, Westlands Playgroup, the Food & Drink Festival, the History Society, Droitwich Action for Future Youth (DAFFY) and the young fire fighters group.

Councillor Mrs Harris added to note that the Christmas Shop decorations on the High street had now been removed but this was long overdue and had caused complaints and distress to people over Easter.

Councillor Mrs Harris congratulated the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge on the birth of their new baby prince.

305 DISTRICT COUNCIL MATTERS
Councillor TJ Noyes advised upon

- a) Wychavon finances were considered to be in good order and further New Homes Bonus money would be available to support further good causes including parish halls and play grounds.
- b) Council Tax debt had necessitated £136,000.00 to be written off. This only represented 354 businesses or people and 0.35% of the total amount payable.
- c) That Councillor Mrs Harris had been nominated for the role of Deputy Chairman for Wychavon District Council which was due to be decided on the 16 May 2018.

306 DROITWICH SPA RAIL USER’S ACTION GROUP – TO CONSIDER A REPORT AND PROPOSAL FOR SUPPORTING IN PRINCIPLE A DROITWICH SPA RAIL USER’S ACTION GROUP

Councillor A Humphries read out the following statement and proposal.

“As this Council will be aware, at the current time, the public transport infrastructure in Droitwich Spa is not very robust! There are many issues with the bus services that I am aware some of my fellow Councillors are working very hard to resolve which have my full support.

Added to this we have the ongoing and seemingly never-ending work on the M5 meaning travel in our own town is not always the most positive experience. This brings me to a “pet” subject of mine which I know some of you are aware of – the trains.

On a daily basis commuters to and from our town are faced with cancellations, delays, short-formed trains and trains that do not have even the basic facilities such as working toilets.

People are squashed into trains and sometimes are even unable to get on them because they are so overcrowded. I have seen passengers reduced to tears by the dreadful travel experience they have been subjected to.

The service up until October 2017 was provided by London Midland and, it was hoped with the franchise being awarded to West Midlands Railways who are now running it, things might improve – as a daily commuter to and from Birmingham, I can most certainly assure you all, they have not; if anything, they are most definitely worse.

The rail infrastructure is operated through Network Rail.

Bromsgrove has seen improvements, so has Worcester and I am pleased for both those places that they have as they needed those improvements; but so does Droitwich, yet we have seen nothing and, on the face of it, may not see any for a long time.

Enough is enough I say – the people of Droitwich Spa deserve better and we should have and get better.

Therefore, I am seeking this Council’s support for a Droitwich Rail User’s Action group that can enter into a dialogue with West Midlands Railways and Network Rail concerning the poor service currently received and a meaningful discussion around improvements, what they should be and when they should happen. Unless something is done now the situation will only get worse with the potential influx of new people that could come to live in our town over the next few years.

What I am proposing will not take any Council finances or physical resources – it is just your support in principle I am seeking this evening and I will provide regular updates to this Council as and when there are developments.

I want us to fight for a better rail service for our town – we may be small and West Midlands Railways and Network Rail may be big but I am reminded of the saying “it’s not the size of the dog in the fight, it’s the size of the fight in the dog!”.

Thank you

Alan Humphries

Councillor GR Brookes responded and read out the following statement which incorporated seconding the proposal.

I would like to thank Cllr Humphries for bringing this forward. I will gladly second his proposal but would like to say a few words first.

It was originally intended that Cllr Sinton would second this motion, but he has asked me to speak on his behalf since unfortunately he is not here tonight. He has advised that he regularly makes journeys to Birmingham and experiences the same poor service and overcrowding as Cllr Humphries. As it happens, my daughter has recently been staying with us and working in Birmingham, again experiencing exactly the same problems. So I have no doubt that action is urgently needed.

I have made some enquiries as to the present situation. I have been advised that West Midlands Rail have taken over all the franchises in the West Midlands area. Following the poor performances of the various companies involved, the Secretary of State has delegated operational responsibility and funding to West Midlands Rail.

As you may be aware, the line from Birmingham to Worcester is being electrified, with the section as far as Bromsgrove due for completion by 29th April. This will enable additional electric trains to be operated between Bromsgrove and Birmingham. However for the present, old diesel rolling stock has to be used past Bromsgrove. This may well explain the shortage of capacity since West Midlands Trains are unlikely to purchase additional diesel trains knowing they will shortly be obsolete.

Once the electrification to Worcester is completed there is no reason why additional rolling stock could not be available.

I whole heartedly agree with Cllr Humphries' motion to support the formation of a User Group to lobby for improvements, but I would like to take a small further step in support.

If Cllr Humphries agrees, I would like to second the motion with an additional proposal that the Town Clerk be asked to write to West Midlands Rail to ask when the next stage of electrification between Droitwich and Worcester is scheduled for completion. I would also like him to ask if there is any reason why West Midlands Trains cannot immediately make use of some of the redundant diesel rolling stock from areas where electrification is completed, to increase capacity of the present trains to Droitwich. This could provide an immediate improvement."

RESOLVED That the Town Council supports Councillor Humphries motion for the formation of a Droitwich Spa rail users action group and secondly for the Town Clerk to write to West Midlands Rail on behalf of the Town Council to raise the points as detailed by Councillor GR Brookes.

307 ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT

Creditor Payments were presented to the Council.

RESOLVED That the statement of accounts for payment be received and the expenditure totalling £1099.48 as now appended be approved and duly passed for payment.

The Meeting ended at 7.47pm.

Chairman of Council _____

11 June 2018

COUNCIL MEETING 23 APRIL 2018 – MINUTE NO 308 REFERS**Creditor Payments List**

11244	Droitwich Print/ Spa Display c/o Skipton Business Finance Ltd Printing of sundry debtor accounts.	£289.20
11245	Hinton Pest Control Limited Rat treatment – Chawson Lane allotments	£216.00
11246	Association of Independent Museums Small Museum Membership- 13.3.18 to 12.3.19	£56.00
11247	Stannah Lift Services Ltd Servicing Stannah stair lift.	£161.26
11248	Weldon Heating & Plumbing Community Hall heating system	£270.00
11249	Merlin Office Supplies Limited Stationery	£107.02
	<u>Total</u>	<u>£1099.48</u>

