

DROITWICH SPA TOWN COUNCIL

DROITWICH SPA TOWN MEETING - LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Annual Droitwich Spa Town Meeting held in the Main Hall, Community Hall, Heritage Way, Droitwich Spa on Monday, 9 May 2022 at 6 pm.

A G E N D A

1. To confirm the minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 18 March 2019 (delay attributed to Pandemic which prevented meetings in 2020 & 2021).
2. To receive the reports of the Town Mayor 2021/22 and the Chairmen of the Council's Standing Committees.
3. To receive items to be referred to the Town Council by members of the public.
4. Communications as permitted by the Mayor.

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MINUTES

The Town Mayor and 15 Town Councillors were in attendance, of which 7 were District Councillors and 2 were County Councillors.

Invited representatives present were Mr Vic Allison, Managing Director- Wychavon District Council, Sergeant Sarah Kent of West Mercia Constabulary and Reverend Nigel Byard.

The meeting was attended by 3 Town electors.

PRESS ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Mr Tristan Harris – Editor, 'Droitwich Standard'.

A public notice convening the meeting had been displayed on noticeboards at St Richards House (inside and outside the premises) and at the Community Hall (inside and outside the premises) for the required period. Copies of the Agenda, Mayor's & Chairman's Standing Committee Reports and Minutes of the Town Meeting held on 18 March 2019 were made available at the meeting.

The Town Mayor, Councillor WT Moy took the Chair and welcomed invited guests and members of the public present.

Councillor Moy then introduced:-

Councillor Mrs Christine Bowden – Chairman of the Community & Amenities Committee.

Councillor G Duffy - Chairman of Planning Committee.

Councillor Mrs Kate Fellows - Chairman of Resources Committee.

The Mayor advised that there were other members of the Town Council that were in attendance at the meeting, who would be speaking in their capacity as residents.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: There had been no apologies for absence submitted.

MINUTES: the Minutes of the Town Meeting held on 18 March 2019 were presented for adoption. Mr SJ Rigby (63 Swann Drive, Droitwich Spa) objected and requested it to be recorded in the minutes of this meeting that a copy had not been made available to him within the accompanying papers this evening. The Town Clerk handed Mr Rigby a copy of the minutes to read. Through the Chairman the Town Clerk explained that the minutes were for noting for acceptance and did not require a proposer and seconder. It was added that the minutes from 2019 were the previous Town Council Administration due to the elapsed timescales caused by the Pandemic. The Town Clerk confirmed through the Chairman that Mr Rigby's objection had been duly noted and copies of the Town Meeting minutes from 2019 would be posted to all three residents in attendance this evening, the next morning. Attendance records for the 2019 Town Meeting confirm that Mr SJ Rigby **was not** in attendance on that occasion.

REPORTS: The Mayor referred to his written report that had been circulated. The Mayor stated that it had been a great honour and privilege to represent Droitwich Spa throughout the 3 years covering a wide range of Civic engagements in all parts of the Town, District and further afield. The pandemic had presented difficult challenges and circumstances for everyone. To conclude the Mayor expressed appreciation to fellow Councillors and the Town Council Officers for their support.

The Mayor then invited the Chairman of the Town Council Planning Committee – Councillor G Duffy to present and read out his report. Councillor Duffy summarised his report.

Councillor Mrs C Bowden presented the Community & Amenities Committee report. Attention was drawn to certain issues and specific matters of interest including the Heritage Centre & Museum volunteer team, the Summer Band Concerts beginning from 15 May 2022 and the Town Events. Special mention was made towards the forthcoming Queens Platinum Jubilee Celebrations in June. Thanks were conveyed to Sharon Abbott- Assistant Town Clerk, Community & Amenities for organising the schedule of band concerts.

Councillor Mrs Kate Fellows, Chairman of the Resources Committee then presented and advised upon the Resources Committee report. Special mention included the emergence from the pandemic restrictions, the zero increase on the precept for 2022/2023, the healthy financial position and good overall standards for due diligence and governance. A particular highlight updated was the new Apprenticeship position which is anticipated to be effective from August /September. This is an exciting first such venture for the Town Council and it is hoped to welcome a local school leaver to the new position.

Thereafter the Mayor invited residents at the meeting to speak on their matters of concern.

➤ Mrs Val Humphries, 17 West Street, Droitwich Spa.

Mrs Humphries commented that she was pleased to return to Town Meetings but was disappointed about the public attendance. The question was raised as to what arrangements had been made to publicise the meeting?

The Town Clerk responded that all of the statutory notices and periods for the meeting had been complied with. These included public notices displayed outside and inside the Town Council premises (St Richards House and the Community Hall), the Notice, Agenda and Reports all being posted on the Town Council website and notifications of the Agenda to the local press. Individual notifications had been sent to all Elected Members. The Town Council hopes that the public attendance and interest will be stronger for the 2023 meeting which is anticipated to be in March and reverts back to the usual annual timetable. It is thought that the emergence and recovery from the Pandemic may still be contributory factors for the lower attendance at public meetings and events at the moment.

- Mr SJ Rigby, 63 Swann Drive, Droitwich Spa.

A question was raised about the progress of the Neighbourhood Plan taken from reference and an extract from the 2019 Town Meeting minutes. Through the Chairman the Town Clerk responded that there had been substantial progress on Neighbourhood Planning options which had recently been fully updated by Councillor GR Brookes as a component of the last Full Town Council meeting, which had taken place on 25th April 2022. Councillor Brookes (Designated Town Council Representative for Neighbourhood Planning matters) then made reference to his report from 25th April and mentioned that full copies were available.

- Mrs Val Humphries, 17 West Street, Droitwich Spa.

Mrs Humphries requested an update on the progress and cost of the Heritage Augmented Reality App project. The Town Clerk responded that this was regularly updated as part of the Community Legacy project reports at Full Council and had recently been reported on at the meeting on 25 April 2022. Details were included within the agenda posted on the Town Council website. The Town Clerk explained that an alternative Service Provider had been commissioned in early 2022 to improve the App usability, enhance the content and introduce features to assist with visual impairment. This followed reported user efficiency & reliability issues which had developed from the launch date in August 2021. The Service Provider is currently redesigning the operating platform which was originally built on a gaming app structure and is for the main part the issue affecting compatibility and data draw usage for some mobile devices. The Town Clerk has a further progress update scheduled with the Service Provider on 12 May and it is anticipated to go ahead with a full relaunch of the App in late August or September. The cost of the project was currently on target and within the scope of the Community Legacy funding yet to be drawn down from the WDC grant awarded for the project in 2021. The overall project budget is also within the provision set aside.

Mrs Humphries asked exactly what visual enhancement measures had been specified ? The Town Clerk responded that the technical specifications were being dealt with by the professional Service Provider engaged for the App Project. Reassurance was given that the requirement for visual enhancement features had been strongly emphasised with the Service Provider in the course of the wider Steering Group Meetings, including by the Leader of The Town Council. These matters will all be further interpreted as the project moves forward towards the Launch in the autumn.

- Mrs Val Humphries, 17 West Street, Droitwich Spa.

Mrs Humphries raised questions about the 144 Bus Service – Worcester, Birmingham route. The proposed changes were referenced and questions presented as to when the Town Council and Worcestershire County Council had first been informed?

Councillor GR Brookes updated from the perspective of the County Council that the Service Provider has had to make changes to the route for Commercial reasons. The County Council have responded very quickly to help find a solution for passengers in the interim.

- Mrs Val Humphries, 17 West Street, Droitwich Spa

Mrs Humphries asked how close the Town Council was to reinstating the weekly Charter Market ?

The Town Clerk responded that as previously reported the Charter Market Friday weekly arrangements had stopped in 2018 due to the retirement of the Operator due to ill health. Since then considerable effort had been put into the consideration and sourcing of potential alternative market operators towards undertaking a tendering exercise. Unfortunately this

had not been successful in generating sufficient interest from any operators to take this further forward. The Charter Market was a valuable source of supplementary income for the Town Council and was popular with residents and visitors. The Town Council would very much like to see the Charter Market return but this is subject to a suitable operator and commercial viability being confirmed.

Mrs Humphries commented that she had visited the Farmers Market on Saturday 7 May 2022 and was disappointed by the smaller number of stalls trading. The question was raised as to what support the Town Council is providing for the Farmers Market ?

The Town Clerk responded that the Town Council do provide a lot of support working with the Worcestershire Farmers Market Group (WFMG). The arrangement is the first Saturday each month and the Town Council provides secure storage for the stalls and trailer, insurance provision covering this equipment, power supply & infrastructure and regular poster, social media & website publicity. The collaborative working relationship with the Farmers Market is very positive and reciprocated by their support for additional events including the annual Christmas Lights Switch On (26 November 2022) ,the forthcoming Platinum Jubilee Celebration (4th June 2022) and the Food & Drink Festival (25 & 26 June 2022).

➤ Mrs Val Humphries, 17 West Street, Droitwich Spa

Mrs Humphries referred to the pedestrian underpass leading to the station and expressed disappointment that no Councillors had accepted her invitation to accompany her and be shown the area from the perspective of a visually impaired person. The question was raised when will the station underpass be improved?

The Town Clerk responded that the improvements to the Railway Station pedestrian underpass were part of the WDC “West Project and Beyond” initiative. The Town Council is a collaborative stakeholder for the whole project and specifically for the two Ombersley Way (Briar Mill) and the Station underpasses. These three location improvements are being funded by the residual New Homes Bonus Scheme monies remaining. The overall project is regularly reported on for progress updates at Full Council and was last covered at the meeting on 25 April 2022. Progress for the project had been delayed in November 2021 due to the emergence of the Omicron variant of Covid 19 and associated restrictions. The project phases have now restarted and works including graffiti removal, pressure cleaning and white washing preparation are proceeding. Structural defects including floor surface, paving and drainage issues, as well as lighting repairs and the fitting of some LED fixtures will take place prior to the public art murals and “antigriff” coatings being applied to the underpass walls. The approach routes to the underpasses are not altogether part of the West Project and fall within the public realm and responsibility of various other Agencies including WCC Highways, Housing Associations, Network Rail and others. Scheduling for the underpass improvements is progressing with various locations in the West before those at Briar Mill, the Railway Station and the larger one leading from King Georges sports fields under the A38 Dual carriageway. Subject to progress continuing and no major issues affecting the different sites, all locations are expected to receive the attention for improvements during summer and autumn 2022. The public art murals are currently in course at Hunters Way, and Paddock Hill, with Thatcher’s Way anticipated as the next.

➤ Mrs Elaine Mulligan, 2 Dodderhill Road, Droitwich Spa.

Mrs Mulligan asked for a general update on Policing matters in Droitwich Spa. Sergeant Sarah Kent representing West Mercia Police updated that the Safer Neighbourhoods Team (SNT) were carrying out a lot of crime prevention work throughout the Community. The

local team comprises 3 Police Constables and 5 PCSO'S. Droitwich Spa is considered to be a safe place to live. Within the Town current crime trends include the thefts of car keys through burglaries, drugs activity, and some vandalism / graffiti/ anti- social behaviour issues. Seasonal aspects as we progress into summer with longer day light and evenings include incidents of sheds being targeted for the theft of tools and anti – social issues associated with gatherings in parks & open spaces. The SNT are working to help advise on improved security measures for sheds & property and they are increasing their visual patrol presence in the parks & public open spaces.

There being no further questions or comments, and no communications for consideration, the Mayor concluded the meeting at 6.40pm. Councillor Moy thanked the representatives from Wychavon District Council and West Mercia Police for their attendance and support as well as members of the public for their questions.