

MINUTES OF A PARISH MEETING OF LEDBURY

HELD ON 31 MAY 2017 AT THE MARKET THEATRE, 7 p.m.

PRESENT: Cllrs Elizabeth Harvey, Nick Morris, Nina Shields, Andrew Warmington, Harrison Wilce and about 45 members of the public

Richard Hadley opened the meeting to explain the format, legality and process of the meeting. Cllr Shields was elected from the floor to chair the meeting. Votes were tallied by two volunteer tellers

1. Apologies were received from Cllrs Noel and Jayne Roberts and Andrew Harrison
 2. Town Mayor: Cllr Harvey explained the mechanism of election a mayor and the three-ward structure of Ledbury Town Council. Questions were asked about why only councillors rather than the general public elected the mayor and deputy mayor, the nature of the ongoing organisational review, whether a mayor is needed at all, whether candidates are or should be DBS-checked or other reasons by which they might be disqualified, among other things.
- Proposal by Steve Hanson, seconded by Jane Hopkins: That in future elections of mayor and deputy mayor in years where there is no full council election, all candidates should declare their candidacy a minimum of 14 days ahead of the agenda for the Annual Council Meeting being drawn up, with the names of the proposer and seconder, and should make a brief statement about the reasons for their candidacy. For: 43, Against 2
 - Proposal by Kerstin Ingham, seconded by Jim Smith: That a mechanism be devised for absent councillors to be able to vote by proxy in future elections for mayor and deputy mayor. For: 33, Against 5
 - Proposal by Richard Hadley, seconded by Charles Sturgeon: That no mayor be elected for the year 2017-18, that a chairman of the council be elected instead and that civic duties during that year be conducted by the current deputy mayor, where possible. For 30, Against 11

3. Other issues:

There was a general feeling that communications between the Council and the town were poor and that this was not helped by the web site not being user friendly. In particular, members of the public asked that dates and times of meetings be more widely publicised.

Members of the public also expressed disappointment that so few councillors had come to the meeting and that this showed disrespect for the meeting.

Working Group meetings should be advertised for public attendance (and membership) and more effort should be made to notify members of the public when topics they have raised come to committee or to council

Questions were raised about training for councillors – there should be proper induction on election, to include understanding of each councillor's areas of expertise and training package to ensure they have support to undertake their responsibilities on the council. Information sessions should be run on being a councillor and the nature of its work, to encourage more people to stand

More generally, the council needs a prioritised plan for future action – what is the vision, where is it going?

Concern was expressed for the state of the retail core of the town as some felt the mix of businesses is weakening the overall health and attractiveness of the town centre.

More information wanted on council finances and how it spends the precept. Why are its own running costs so high?

- Proposal by Nick Morris, seconded by Charles Sturgeon: That the Town Council dissolve itself and a full election be held for a new Town Council. For 34, Against 2
- Proposal by Jane Horton, seconded by Richard Hadley: That, in the event that the Town Council does not vote to dissolve itself, it should accept mediation or other professional conflict resolution in order to heal the divisions within it for the good of Ledbury. For 40, Against 0

£19.35 was collected towards the cost of hiring the Market Theatre

The meeting concluded at 9.40 p.m.