

**LEDBURY TOWN COUNCIL**  
**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**  
**HELD ON**  
**27 APRIL 2023**

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**PRESENT:** Councillors Bannister (Acting Chair), Chowns, Hughes and Morris

**ALSO PRESENT:** Angela Price – Town Clerk  
Julia Lawrence – Deputy Town Clerk  
Charlotte Bartrop – Minute Taker  
14 Ledbury Residents

**5. CITIZEN OF THE YEAR AWARDS WERE PRESENTED TO:**

Jeremy Wolf  
Nicola Forde  
Anne Lumb

Unfortunately, Tom Collingwood was not present to receive his award, and it was noted that the Mayor would arrange a time to meet with Mr Collingwood to present his award.

**6. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Eakin, Harvey and Howells.

The Chair read the following statement which had been provided by the Mayor and Councillor Eakin detailing their reasons for their apologies for absence:

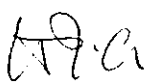
“Following legal election advice from their election agent, Councillor Howells, the Mayor, and Councillor Eakin give their apologies for not attending this evening’s public meeting on the grounds that it could be seen as giving them an electoral advantage over County Councillor candidates who would not receive specific invitations to attend. This meeting could also incur unintended but declarable electoral expenses.”

**7. TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE TOWN MEETING HELD ON 25 JANUARY 2023**

**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the Town Meeting held on 25 January 2023 be confirmed as accurate and signed as a correct record.

**8. CHAIRMAN’S REPORT (read out by Councillor Bannister in the absence**



## of the Mayor)

"To be the Mayor of Ledbury for a second time has been a special honour in a year that has seen momentous national events. We mourned the death of Queen Elizabeth II after a reign of 70 years and 214 days and a lifetime during which she was Queen Regnant of 32 sovereign states. She was the Head of State of 15 realms at the time of her death. Her reign was the longest of any British Monarch and the longest verified reign of any female head of state in history when she died on 8 September 2022.

She was the only Monarch most of us had ever known in our lives until we then marked the Proclamation of a new King. It can be only said to be any Mayor's proudest moments to be a part of history in making the Declaration of the Ascension of King Charles III to the throne in front of the Market House to a packed Ledbury Town centre.

To still be the Mayor on the formal Coronation weekend of the new King will be a special occasion at which to conclude my year as Mayor. To be the Civic representative of Ledbury on these and many other occasions during the year has been a huge and enjoyable privilege.

The Mayor's diary of invitations has been very full as people have returned to a more normal life after the restrictions of the covid years. I've attended many events nearly into treble figures, with formal occasions such as the Declaration of Robert Robinson as the new High Sheriff and the Civic Services of my own and other neighbouring Mayors.

There have been many fun and often charity fund raising occasions too numerous to mention, but including the Ledbury Big Breakfast, the opening of new and very welcome business ventures such as the Roger Oates Design Showroom in Tinsmiths Alley and the Pot & Page launch of a new evening restaurant service, attending street parties and holding Mayor's coffee mornings.

All have been most enjoyable and demonstrated the best of the human spirit and endeavour. I am grateful to the Mayor's Consort, Hilary Jones, for her splendid and energetic support throughout the year and to the Deputy Mayor, Cllr John Bannister for backing me up at the few events I was unable to attend. I must also thank the Clerk and the office staff, and especially Sophie, the Mayor's Secretary, for her diligent and very competent handling of the Mayor's Diary and creative organisation with other staff of many of the Mayoral events held in the town.

I am very pleased to note that we have raised considerable sums into four figures and raised the profile of my charity for the year, Strong Young Minds, and I would like to thank all those who have contributed so generously.

The Mayor is of course also the Chair of the Council, chairing the full Council meetings, the Resources Committee and being the Line Manager for our Clerk.



Resources is all about staff and office matters, much of which has to be confidential because it often relates to matters affecting individual members of staff. But, along with the other committee chairs who make up the committee, we have done good work in organising staff and councillor training, the job evaluations of several members of staff, producing some new and useful related policies for council approval and at long last filling the Town Maintenance post.

Working with the Clerk as her Line Manager has been mostly productive and rewarding, and we have already thanked her for her work since becoming our clerk at the last full Council meeting. There have been some difficult situations during the year we have both had to manage and which has sometimes been unnecessarily distressing for us both, but I am grateful to her for working on them together to ensure that they have been managed with the dignity and integrity the public would expect to see.

I'd like to close by saying many thanks to the very many people of Ledbury who have supported and encouraged me during my term of office."

## **9. COMMITTEE CHAIR REPORTS:**

### **a. Environment & Leisure Committee (Councillor Chowns)**

"The Committee's responsibilities embrace concerns ranging from the physical infrastructure of the town to cultural events and activities. The Events Working Party and the Climate Change Working Party have worked during the year under the oversight of this Committee, and a new working party established to plan the John Masefield Memorial and Celebrations. We record our appreciation of the work of the Chairs of these Working Parties, and the support of the Town Council staff. We also wish to record the contribution made to this sphere of the Council's work over recent years by the late Cllr Dee Knight.

Our remit covers the Recreation Ground, including the Skateboard Park, the Children's play area, the 'half-dome' Shelter, the CCTV coverage of the area, and the routine maintenance and repair thereof. Vandalism occurred in several locations, and liaison with the Police has been regular and constructive. The upgrading of CCTV equipment, here and elsewhere in the Town, is a continuing priority. A substantial sum was spent during 2022 and early 2023 in improving the skate park and play equipment.

The other significant 'green space' for which we are responsible is Dog Hill Wood, above the town to the east. The Woodland Management Plan has highlighted necessary improvements, and we arranged for the restoration of some of the seating and the signage in this area. A volunteer group was set up last Autumn whereby members assisted with the coppicing of trees and clearing vegetation to allow new growth. As a result of a recent Tree Survey, a programme of tree felling and removal of crowns in some of the

trees is planned to take place this coming winter, although some trees have already been felled for safety.

The Cemetery Chapel was opened for visitors on the last Sunday before Christmas for residents to come and light a candle in memory of their loved ones. Some interior refurbishment took place in the Chapel last year and it is hoped that further works can take place this year to enhance the Chapel pews and lecterns.

A digital mapping system has been created to improve information and records of the cemetery contents.

The Christmas Lights contractor improved the installation in 2022, and the lights continue to be well-received by the public.

The Events Working Party includes representatives of the traders, and organisers of the Community Day, the Carnival, Poetry Festival, and other town events. This year it once again promoted a World Book Day, a Careers and Jobs Fair, and the celebration of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations in June 2022 and is now planning for the Coronation event in May 2023.

The Town Council gazebos, purchased last year, have been extensively utilised by a variety of organisations, including for example the Twinning Committee and we would remind residents that these are available for free for use by Ledbury based organisations. The Climate Change Working Party supported several volunteer groups which have been tidying and clearing the Town Trail and organising 'Litter picks' The WP aims to promote its concerns during the national 'Big Green Week' event in June 2023.

The E & L Committee is glad to report that a new contractor has been engaged to rectify the unsatisfactory restoration of the War Memorial. This work is due to be carried out during the summer, so that the Memorial will be at its best for the Service of Remembrance in November."

**b. Finance, Policy & General Purposes Committee (Councillor Hughes)**

"This report is a statement of the work of the of Finance, Policy and General Purposes Committee. You can access the Year End Statement of audited accounts 1st April 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 on the Finance pages of Council's website. The End of Year documents for 1st April 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 will be published on the Finance pages of Council's website by the end of June 2023.

The Committee has continued the day-to-day management of the financial affairs of the Council; and engaged in the continual review and approval of Council policies and procedures and the Risk Register. There are a number

2.14.23

of powers delegated to the Committee by Full Council and these include authorising expenditure on works, goods, and services.

The Committee also meets bi-monthly to approve payment of invoices received; scrutinise the record of receipts and payments; monitor monthly spending and balance sheets; verify bank statements and reconciliations and to receive the outcomes of external audit processes.

The Committee makes recommendations to Full Council including priorities for the Corporate Plan; makes changes and updates to Council policies to maintain quality of governance; and recommends an annual budget to Council.

The Committee has also established two working groups. One group is tasked with monitoring the budget month-by-month. The other group determines recommendations for grant applications received by Council and also recommends spending priorities and choices for monies granted to the Council. Two recent examples of such grants are UK government funded 'Welcome Back' funds post-COVID, and secondly, the Great Places to Visit fund.

My thanks to councillors and officers who are members of or support our working groups.

In partnership with auditors, the Committee also investigates any errors or anomalies in accounting and the proper application of financial regulations and Standing Orders; the two principal instruments of governance. We also receive reports of any monies owing to Council funds and we make arrangements for the recovery of those monies. This year we have also investigated matters of governance and regulation in relation to works carried out to our Town War Memorial.

We have set a budget which maintains services and reserves needed for current and future stewardship of the historic assets of our town. The Precept (the towns income from local taxation) has increased by 3.1%. This increase is made at a time when general inflation in the form of the Consumer Prices Index rose by 10.4% in the 12 months to February 2023 and building renovation and refurbishment prices have risen by more than 20% in the last 12 months, mostly due to rising costs of materials.

The Committee is grateful for the ongoing work of the Finance Clerk and Senior Finance Officer, our Town Clerk. I am grateful for the contribution and guidance offered by other members of the Committee; and I commend the work of the Committee to the people of Ledbury.”

**c. Planning, Economy & Tourism Committee (Councillor Morris)**

“This has been our first full year, post-pandemic. This is also my first year as Chair of this committee. Succeeding Cllr Bannister was no easy task! I have been motivated by his report of last year and much still applies.

**The purposes of this committee are:**

- 1) To promote events and businesses which attract visitors to Ledbury and boost the local economy; and;
- 2) Develop programmes and actions to support local businesses and attract grants and inward investment

The majority of the day-to-day work, in pursuance of these purposes is completed by an officer of the Council, the Community Development Officer, directed and supported by our Town Clerk. This was a new appointment to the staffing structure of the Council, and we have been most fortunate in the selection of our substantive CDO and, subsequently, her maternity cover.

It was agreed to concentrate the work of the committee into two main areas:

- 1) To promote the Charter Market and any other speciality markets in the town, concentrating effort into the market pitches under, and adjacent to the Market House.
- 2) To promote the work of the guides of the Painted Room, the custodians of other historic attractions and organisers of other cultural and community events.

Part of this work is to replace the Tourist Information Centre with:

- i) much enhanced TIC in the reception area of the Council Offices and;
- ii) when feasible, with a second TIC in our iconic Master's House as part of the development of the area at the barn end of St Katherine's car park.

We have endeavoured to spend money on items that enhance the town from the following two central government grants – the *Welcome Back Fund* and the *Great Places to Visit Fund*.

In April 2022, the current CDO went on maternity leave.

Prior to this, she had managed the town's promotion of World Book Day 2022 and set up the plans for the Platinum Jubilee Celebrations.

**CDO's achievements, April 2022-January 2023**

Her maternity cover took over the following responsibilities. The first of which was to oversee the celebration we held on the Recreation Ground for the Platinum Jubilee.

With the help of some councillors and staff, our gazebos were erected and decorated for this event. A large number of people attended and enjoyed the acceptable weather.

## **Heritage Open Days**

Mid-September after H-Art, the CDO coordinated all the groups taking part (Burgage Hall, Butcher Row House Museum, Heritage Centre, The Painted Room, The Poetry House, The Market House, The Master's House and St Michael's Church and Bell Tower). As this was only our second year, there was a very positive and encouraging response to the three-day event.

## **Charter Markets**

The CDO regularly visited the traders and sought new ones, maintaining favourable relationships with our regulars, and establishing good ties with the newcomers.

## **John Masefield Memorial**

This is an ongoing plan for the town, backed unanimously by Full Council. With extensive knowledge and appreciation of the subject, the CDO laid the foundation for the Working Party, and it became clear that a Project Manager should be sought. With the support of Full-Council and the Environment & Leisure Committee, funds were made available. There was a very positive response to our advertisement, and we selected a talented professional for this role. Her enthusiasm and experience will push this project forward.

We are looking forward to Masefield's birthday on 1<sup>st</sup> June which marks the launch of the project's next phase.

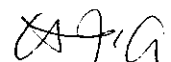
## **Planning Applications**

Firstly, in succeeding Cllr Bannister as Chair, I would like to thank him for his impeccable hard work for this committee.

We have looked at a multitude of applications, challenging and questioning the predatory developers in local builds. There have been issues highlighted by Ledbury Town Council to Planning Officers at Hereford Council in respect of the new development at Hawk Rise, and it is hoped that these can and will be resolved via discussions between Hereford Council Planners and the Developers, without too much disruption to the families living in these properties.

I have to thank the Clerk and her staff in supporting and undertaking the enormous amount of work that this committee requires. At our last meeting, I thanked all members of the committee for their hard work and productive contributions.

Looking forward there remain significant challenges to properly coordinating the mission and work of our community organisations; to harnessing the Herculean effort of so many individual members of our community and particularly those who aspire to work with our young people."



**10. TOWN COUNCIL BUDGET 2023/24**

**RESOLVED:**

**That the information regarding the Town Council Budget 2023/24 be received and noted.**

**11. COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS FROM ANY ELECTOR OF LEDBURY PARISH**

Q1 – ES – I became a Councillor due to the botch job which was done on the War Memorial. Steve Ellis told Phillip Howells of the problems and on 3 January 2020, Steve provided an interim report at the end of 2020 confirming that it was substandard. When Ledbury Town Council knew that the work was substandard, why were they still getting quotes from The Stone Workshop?

A1 - JB – I don't think that we can answer that question here. I'm not too sure that this is the right forum to do that. Councillor Hughes put three questions at the last Full Council meeting, which are still yet to be debated by the Council, it seems to me that this debate should be left for the next Full Council meeting, following which it will be able to provide a full statement in response to this issue.

ES – That's just an entirely poor answer. This Council, you included as well as Phillip, have tried to block me at every opportunity when I have tried to get to the bottom of this. Information was redacted, so that its importance was not clear on the Freedom of Information request. Information was not included on the Freedom of Information that should have been included and it's not until recently that I became aware of the redacted information, that this Council was fully appraised as to what had been done to that War Memorial but was still communicating with the Stone Workshop as if they were best friends. If a Cowboy builder did something wrong to my house, I would not be getting the Cowboy builder to quote to put the work right, so why was this Council doing that? I think that we need an answer.

JB – No doubt an answer will be forthcoming following the next Full Council meeting.

Q2 – KF – What improvements are being made to the Market?

A2 - NM – The Market is a difficult project; we are still working on getting it back to strength, but this is a Herculean task and we do think that it is a very important part of the town.

Q3 – BH – Recently there was a discussion about having a Warden on the Recreation Ground, but it was decided that a Youth Leader would be more appropriate. Can you tell me what's happening with this? And has a place been allocated for the Youth Club?

5.6.23



A3 - SC – Youth provision is a big issue for the town. I understand that there is some optimism that the youth drop in will be able to open by the end of 2023. It was felt that a Warden would be a retrograde step but a drop in will require volunteers in order to be viable. In a town of 10,000 to not be able to get 18 people to stand for the Council, getting volunteers to run the youth drop in may be an issue, especially as it's important to have people who are not octogenarian. We need to learn lessons from Colwall who have an excellent drop in facility.

Q4 – JW – Can outside Busy Bee's be tidied up?

A4 - SC – This is a Herefordshire Council building.

Q5 – JW – There was a bin moved, is there any possibility of any extra bins? The bins on Mables Furlong are full and Oaklands Drive is the same.

A5 - SC – We will consider this at the next meeting of Environment & Leisure Committee

JW – How often should they be emptied?

AP – They should be emptied daily. Officers will follow up with Balfour Beatty if they are not being done.

Q6 – JW – Regarding the Bus Stops, the warden was out warning people to move from the one by the Market House as it gets used as a stopping place for people popping to Greggs. They all need re-lining; I have reported this to Herefordshire Council.

A6 - JB – The Bus stop by the War Memorial has some Section 106 money allocated to improve it.

Q7 – KF – I would like to congratulate the Council for the tables and chairs, they are of real benefit to the community. Are any of the local businesses charged for them?

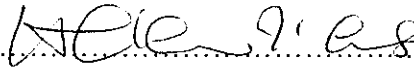
A7 - AP – There is no charge for any of the businesses to use them. They are only for takeaway food; the businesses are not allowed to offer table service in this area.

JB – This was originally Councillor Harvey's idea.

A member of the public stated that they would like to say what a good job has been done of the railings on the Southend, it looks really good down there now.

The meeting ended at 7.46pm.

Handwritten signature or initials, possibly 'A.A.C.' or similar, in black ink.

Signed .....  ..... Dated ..... 21/02/24 .....  
(Chair)