

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING  
MONDAY 19<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2021 AT 6PM  
HELD VIRTUALLY VIA ZOOM**

**Present**

Bewdley Town Councillors: Anna Coleman (Mayor), John Byng, Roger Coleman, Calne Edginton-White, Paul Gittins MBE, Paul Harrison, Daniel Morehead, Rod Stanczyszyn.

Twenty-Nine members of the public, including representatives of voluntary and community organisations within and serving the town.

Town Clerk Sharon Hudson; Administration Officer Kerry Smith

**Introduction**

The Mayor welcomed everyone to the virtual Annual Town Meeting. It was explained that that this meeting was not a council meeting, and therefore no decisions could be made during this meeting.

**Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Liz Davies and Sarah Billett:

**Minutes**

It was **RESOLVED** to **Approve** the draft minutes of the previous Annual Town Meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> April 2019 as a true and accurate records of that meeting.

**Representative from the Environment Agency**

Mr Alex Thompson the Environment Agencies FCRM Officer spoke of the ground inspection works being undertaken at Beales Corner which are due to be completed by 29/04/2021, also of the work being undertaken on future permanent flood barriers and the ambitious timescales for the project with a full business case hoped for by Spring 2022. A website has been set up to allow for community engagement and feedback. [blbfrms@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:blbfrms@environment-agency.gov.uk)

Questions were invited:

Cllr Rod Stanczyszyn asked whether the project finances had been signed off. Alex Thompson confirmed the case had to go through a review process but felt the project would reach construction.

Cllr Calne Edginton White thanked Alex for joining the meeting at short notice and asked him to take back the Councils thanks to the EA team.

Members of the public raised questions about the Beales Corner barrier design, where the project funding would be coming from and the timeline for completion.

Alex Thompson confirmed that the final barrier design had not yet been agreed and that it would probably be a mixture of both permanent and demountable barriers (similar to those on Severn Side North and South); some of the funding for the project would come from the 2021-2027 EA budget, the remainder of the funding would be sought by the project team; the aim is to complete the project by summer 2022.

**Mayor's Annual Report**

The Mayor spoke of the lack of events during this Mayoral year due to the pandemic. On Friday 16<sup>th</sup> April, the Mayor attended a memorial church service at Worcester Cathedral

for the Duke of Edinburgh. Earlier in the year, she had been honoured to welcome a visit from the High Sheriff of Worcestershire to Bewdley, who assisted in presenting the mayoral awards. Despite ongoing restrictions, the Mayor's association with local charities was able to continue via virtual meetings with the Civic Society and The Old Grammar School. The Mayor also spoke of her association with the Burlton, Cookes & Sayers Almshouses, and the hard work they undertake to provide affordable housing within Bewdley.

The Mayor extended a huge thanks to all community organisations for their hard work, despite restrictions. Council Officers were also thanked for the work undertaken on IT, which allowed the Council to hold zoom meeting early on during the first lockdown.

### **Town Council Annual Report**

The Town Council Annual report had been forwarded to all attendees via email prior to the meeting. The report, which listed the details of the Council's functions, its meetings, budget and Councillors' names, for the past year, was also made available on the Town Council website. The Town Clerk confirmed that since the report had been published Cllr Simon Collingridge had resigned from the Council and there were now two vacancies in the Bewdley West Ward. One vacancy would be filled following the May 2021 by-election; another by-election would be held in June to fill the other vacancy.

The Mayor thanked both Michael Maher and Simon Collingridge for their excellent contributions as Town Councillors.

### **Reports from Councillors:**

Worcestershire County Councillor for Cookley, Wolverley & Wribbenhall Ian Hardiman and Bewdley West Ward Cllr Calne Edginton White read out their reports both of which are available on the Town Council website.

Cllr Rod Stanczyszyn spoke of the issues faced by respective planning applications, also of the neighbourhood plan Regulation 14 consultation, which may be delayed until after the summer as additional funding will need to be sought from Locality. Cllr Rod Stanczyszyn provided a report which is also on the Town Council website.

### **Reports from Bewdley Community Organisations:**

A number of written and verbal reports were presented on behalf of:

- Bewdley and District Horticultural Society
- Bewdley Festival
- St George's Hall Venue Management
- Bewdley Tree Wardens
- Friends of Bewdley Museum
- Bewdley Branch Royal British Legion
- Bewdley Twinning Association
- Bewdley Choral Society
- Bewdley Town Football Club
- Bewdley Civic Society
- Burlton's, Cookes & Sayers Almshouses
- Bewdley Rotary Club
- Friends of Riverside North Park
- Bewdley Anti-Racism Group
- Bewdley Development Trust

- Bewdley Historical Research Group
- The Pick-Up Artists
- Bewdley Scout Group
- Bewdley-in-Kind COVID Group
- 1<sup>st</sup> Bewdley Rainbows
- St Anne's and St Leonard's Churches
- Bewdley Churches Together

Five community organisations had registered to speak during the meeting, representatives from the organisations spoke as follows:

- Bewdley Civic Society spoke about their involvement with various projects in the community, including a newly commissioned information touch screen for the Museum, installation of a blue plaque in 44-45 High Street, lighting up of the Bridge over Christmas and the continued publication of their newsletters four times a year. There are currently 500 members and information about membership is available on their website.
- Bewdley Rotary Club spoke about their continued fundraising efforts, £2000 of which was distributed to local foodbanks. They had gained 9 new members, conducted 34 on-line meetings with 75% participation at any time and were involved in the launching of the 'Now is the Time' campaign, to encourage new people to join the Rotary in addition to traditional methods. The Mayor thanked the Rotary Club for their donation of a Christmas Tree to the town in 2020, and it was established that the Rotary Club will also be donating one in 2021.
- Burlton's, Cookes & Sayers Almshouses Trust spoke about the fourteen, one-to-two-bedroom properties they manage and have restored, based in Lower Park, High Street and Park Lane. Applications were invited for residency, although there is currently a waiting list. The Mayor was thanked for her service during her term of office.
- Bewdley-in-Kind spoke of their growth and assistance to the community since the pandemic in March 2020. All volunteers have the appropriate security clearance and provide support financially, emotionally, and practically to those who need it. To date, they have helped around 500 residents and at their height, April to May 2020, there were 70 volunteers assisting.
- Elim Riverside Church spoke of their work in the community, including the feeding of 100 families over the Christmas period. They assisted the Bronze Cell Team twice during the floods, and wished to offer their continued support for the future. Their café, 'Just Love at Clementines' is due to re-open in May, following their initial opening in October 2020, just prior to lockdown.

The Mayor encouraged other organisations share their news:

- Friends of Riverside North Park spoke of looking forward to working with the Town Council once the park transfer was completed.
- The Local Historical Research Group spoke of the support given to Bewdley resident with regards to the history of their homes and families.
- First Bewdley Rainbows confirmed the resumption of the group's meeting at the Old Grammar School from May 2021.

- Bewdley Anti-Racism Group spoke of future plans and concerns about the riverside café culture and the safety of residents.

## **Public Debate**

The Mayor chaired discussion involving Town Councillors and members of the public as to issues currently affecting the town. Three members of the public had registered to raise questions during the public debate including, the provision of online inclusion during council meetings, in a hybrid fashion; planning and parking issues in Ribbesford and Heightington; and consideration for the possibility of acquisition of Jubilee Gardens, with other green-spaces, to form a new Green Trust.

In relation to the provision of online involvement in meetings, it was stated that currently, Bewdley Town Council does not have the appropriate technology, but that consideration for provision in the future should not be ruled out.

Advice and information was provided by both Town and District Councillors in attendance, in relation to the Ribbesford and Heightington issues, and Jubilee Gardens.

Having therefore dealt with questions raised, and with there being no other contributions, the Mayor again thanked everyone for attending and declared the meeting closed at 7.54pm.

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**Mayor/Chairman**  
**Annual Town Meeting**  
**19<sup>th</sup> April 2021**