



BEWDLEY Town Council

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING MONDAY 25 APRIL 2022 AT 7.00PM HELD IN THE FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE, LOWER PARK, BEWDLEY, DY12 2DP

The Meeting was chaired by Cllr P Harrison (Mayor) of Bewdley Town Council.

In attendance:

5 Members of the public including representatives of voluntary and community organisations within and serving the town.

Worcestershire County Councillor: I Hardiman

District and Bewdley Town Councillors: A Coleman and C Edginton-White

Bewdley Town Councillors: S Billett, P Gittins MBE, I Lattimer and E Seldon.

Town Council Staff Members: Town Clerk Tracy Bodley; Administration Assistant and Mayor's PA.

Introduction

The Mayor welcomed everyone to the Annual Town Meeting and explained that this meeting is the occasion where all who live within the boundary of Bewdley are given the opportunity to meet the Town, District, County Councillors and representatives from local organisations to ask questions freely of all who attend.

Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Byng, H Lacy, D Morehead and R Stanczyszyn.

Apologies also received by representatives of the Horticultural Society, Rotary Club, Rowing Club and the Tree Warden.

Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 19 April 2021

It was **RESOLVED** to **Approve** the minutes of the previous Annual Town Meeting as a true and accurate record and signed by the Mayor.

Mayor's Annual Report

The Mayor spoke of the reduced number of events during the first part of the Mayoral year due to the pandemic which increased toward the end of 2021 and into 2022. Speaking aloud from a report supplied in advance of the meeting and attached to the minutes, the Mayor spoke of his charities; Wyre Forest Citizens Advice Bureau and Reach and the successful charity events that were held during his municipal year which will be completed by an Afternoon Tea at Wharton Park on 28 April.

The Mayor also touched on the recent floods and Localism enabling transfer of land, property and services from Wyre Forest District Council to Bewdley Town Council to include Riverside North Park, Borough House and the public toilets. He stated that the transfer of the Guildhall, Museum and Jubilee Gardens was also included in the Localism agenda with the freehold promised to the Town Council and the management agreed to an independent trust however the council remained 'in the dark' over any formal agreement at this stage.

Bewdley Heritage Trust

Following a statement from the mayor regarding the transfer of the Guildhall, Museum and Jubilee Gardens, the Trust's Chairman suggested that this might be an opportunity to address

the meeting with an update on the progress of the establishment of the Trust. The Mayor welcomed the Chairman to speak.

It was confirmed that The Charity Commission had now accepted the registration and that it could now act as a charitable trust. The timeline for the transfer of the management of land, property and service provision would be toward the end of 2022, however this was not an agreed and binding date, more of a hopeful aim.

The shadow trust and now established trust had held positive talks with Wyre Forest District Council in relation to agreeing a lease and for viable funding and financial commitment covering several years, however it was stated that additional funds would need to be secured from other sources. The Chairmen stated that the first steps would be to recruit a Museum Manager and to agree the terms of the lease and WFDC grant on offer.

The Mayor thanked the Chairman of Bewdley Heritage Trust for the update and asked if any members of the public present had questions to put to the Trust.

A representative from the Civic Society stated that there were many interested community members and some members of the Civic Society that would welcome input into the management of activities provided by the Trust and asked that the Trust keep the society abreast with information and updates. The Civic Society representative added that society members had a wealth of knowledge and experience to offer the Trust and would not wish to be excluded to the detriment of the successful running of the town asset.

Town Council Annual Report

The Town Council Annual report had been circulated to all attendees on entry to the meeting. The report, which listed the details of the Council's functions, its meetings, accounts and councillor details, for the past year, is also made available on the Town Council website and circulated as part of the minutes.

The Town Clerk stated that she would be happy to answer questions relating to the council accounts or functions.

A member of the public asked which agency was responsible for the hedge cutting on Ribbesford Road and was informed that this was outside the town boundary.

Reports from Councillors:

Reports were provided by the following County, District and Town Councillors

Worcestershire County Cllr Hardiman for Cookley, Wolverley & Wribbenhall

Worcestershire County Cllr Morehead for Ribbesford, Rock and Upper Arley

District Cllr Edginton White for Rock

District Cllr Byng for Wribbenhall and Arley

Bewdley Wribbenhall Ward Town Cllr Morehead (as part of their County Cllr report)

Bewdley West Ward Town Cllr Edginton White (as part of their District Cllr report)

Bewdley Wribbenhall Ward Town Cllr Byng (as part of their District Cllr report)

For the benefit of the audience Cllrs Hardiman and Edginton White read aloud their respective reports. All reports are available on the Town Council website.

A member of the public asked Cllr Edginton White in her capacity as Chairman of the Road Safety Group about the pollution at Welchgate as with legislation imposed by Government and change in vehicles to modern ecologically sustainable alternatives concerns over pollution may remedy itself. Cllr Edginton White responded stating that the group has requested a further survey of the area from WCC to determine if interpretation of analysis showed any marked improvement since the last survey was carried out, however the area of Welchgate was a wider issue than that of pollution and covered pedestrian safety amongst highlighted concerns.

A member of the public asked Cllr Edginton White in her capacity of Group Lead of the flood alleviation group if the Environment Agency were looking to extend the proposed barrier scheme to the areas outside that of Beales Corner as it was pointed out that the football

ground had sustained regular flooding of the site which had led to the cancellation of football matches and the regular car boot sales which had also been impacted by the pandemic. Cllr Edginton White stated that she could approach the EA regarding possible funding opportunities for the club.

Reports from Bewdley Community Organisations:

A number of written and verbal reports were presented which are included as part of the minutes on behalf of:

- Bewdley and District Horticultural Society
- Bewdley Festival
- Bewdley Tree Wardens
- Bewdley Branch Royal British Legion
- Bewdley Town Football Club
- Bewdley Civic Society
- Bewdley Rotary Club
- Friends of Riverside North Park
- Community Transport Wyre Forest
- Bewdley Rowing Club
- Bewdley Flood Defence Group

Two community organisations requested to speak during the meeting, representatives from the organisations spoke as follows:

- Bewdley Town Football club reported that revenue had been impacted due to the pandemic and that in an effort to boost funds they had taken a booking from the Male Voice Choir for group rehearsals. Sadly, as previously mentioned car boots sales had to be cancelled however it has a current regular booking renting part of the field to a dog trainer.
It was reported that the pitch had been flooded three times in recent months with expenditure of £50k to improve drainage.
The club has recently installed a new covered stand with seating due to a requirement by the league in which it is placed. Ground standards must also be maintained to a high standard albeit only taking gate receipts of approximately £300 per match. The club has a club house and licenced bar and also offers pitch side refreshments. The club is due to expand its playing capacity by introducing a female team with try-outs being held imminently.
- Bewdley Civic Society spoke about their involvement with various projects in the community after receiving covid grant funding of £10k, including a Covid memorial bench and tree, lighting up the Bridge over Christmas both in conjunction with BTC, cleaning the pond in Jubilee Gardens and grant funding a project for Wribbenhall Scouts.
It was reported that the society had held talks and tours in a virtual and physical format and had also contributed funds to the cleaning of the Astley Memorial, albeit outside the town's boundary.
The society takes interest in planning applications particularly those within the conservation area. It also continues publication of its newsletters four times a year to members.
The Society representative remarked that there was initial concern by society members with the WFDC decision to transfer the Guildhall, Museum and gardens to the Trust. This was compounded following the decision made by the shadow trust to deny associates and churches a request to act on an advisory committee. It now had more confidence in the new Trust and hope that they will engage with the community over its plans.

Public Debate

The Mayor asked if any members of the public would like to ask questions or raise matters of concern.

There were no further questions raised, and with there being no other contributions, the Mayor thanked everyone for attending and declared the meeting closed at 19:43hrs

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Mayor/Chairman
Annual Town Meeting
7 March 2023

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