

LEOMINSTER TOWN COUNCIL



LEOMINSTER ANNUAL TOWN MEETING 2021

Minutes of the Leominster Annual Town Meeting held virtually via Zoom on Monday 19th April 2021 commencing at 7:30pm

MEMBERS PRESENT: Cllrs Thomas (Mayor), Rumsey (Deputy Mayor) (19.46), Bartlett, Davies, Marsh, Murdoch, Norman, Rosser, Smith-Winnard, Williams, Williamson (19.40)

ALSO PRESENT: Cllr Stone (Herefordshire Council Ward Member) and 3 members of the public.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Town Clerk, Democratic Services Officer

1. WELCOME & INTRODUCTION

Cllr Thomas welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked everyone for attending.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr Herschy.

3. MINUTES

Cllr Bartlett pointed out that there was an error on page 6 and requested that it was changed to show that she was the Mayor.

Subject to the correction of the error, the meeting **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Meeting held on 8th April 2019 be adopted and signed as a correct record.

4. ANNUAL REPORT

Cllr Thomas presented Leominster Town Council's annual report for 2019/20 and 2020/21. He outlined the work undertaken by the Town Council and thanked everyone for their support.

A copy of the report is attached.

5. QUESTIONS

Questions were invited from the electors present.

Signage

The Town Council was congratulated on the installation of the signage interpretation boards. It was felt that these would be of benefit to tourists and residents as they are very informative.

The Royal Oak Hotel

Concern was expressed regarding the poor condition of The Royal Oak Hotel. It was stated that over the past 3 years the building has been deteriorating rapidly and concerns were raised regarding the preservation of the building – which is Grade II listed – and the risks it poses to the safety of the public. The elector wanted to know what was happening with the building and whether the Town Council had any concerns.

It was explained that the building was the responsibility of Herefordshire Council. Cllr Rosser advised that the matter would be raised at the next Planning & Highways Committee meeting and Herefordshire Council would be contacted for any comments.

High Street Heritage Action Zone

An elector queried why they were unable to find any information on the HSHAZ on the Town Council website.

It was explained that a new Town Council website has just been implemented. A summary of the HSHAZ and an action plan will be included on the website.

The clerk presented the following questions that had been received from an elector prior to the meeting:

Derelict building at the rear of the Priory

Q: When will the council do something about the derelict building on the picnic area at the rear of the Priory which is currently fenced off as being unsafe. It is totally overgrown with trees and shrubs. Are you hoping it will fall down and thus disappear into history. By the way the fence is broken at one side and obviously a meeting place for undesirables judging by the amount of rubbish left behind. I have not taken photos on this occasion maybe someone should physically have a look.

A: The building will be part of the Pinsley Mead and Grange Masterplan which is due to commence shortly.

Maintenance of streets and pavements

Q: I would like to ask what action has been taken in the last twelve months by the council to the relevant authorities regarding the maintenance and repair of our streets and pavements. Clearly no appreciative response has been received as I can see no maintenance whatsoever having taken place. This should surely be a persistent on going topic for this council to pursue.

A: It was explained that the condition of roads and pavements is regularly reported to Herefordshire Council who are responsible for the maintenance. There is insufficient funding available to carry out many repairs and the priority this year will be drainage.

Cllr Marsh advised that she would attend the next Planning & Highways Committee meeting to demonstrate how to report road defects on the Balfour Beatty website.

6. SUMMARY AND CLOSURE

Cllr Thomas, Mayor of Leominster, thanked the Town Council staff and volunteers for their work, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic. Cllr Thomas thanked the clerk for her excellent organisation and for taking on numerous tasks, and the Projects and Grants Officer for her work in obtaining grants for various projects.

There being no other business, the Mayor thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting at 8:35pm.

MAYOR OF LEOMINSTER:

DATE:

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING REPORT 2019/20 & 2020/21**INTRODUCTION:**

This past year has been a very different year as a result of the global COVID-19 pandemic, which has seen three national lockdowns. Leominster Town Council, like some councils didn't change mayors, so I became Mayor for a second year. There were no public functions and the Town Council quickly began to work and hold meetings remotely, which worked very well.

How Leominster Town Council, the Leominster COVID-19 SOS Group, Community Wheels, Food Bank and volunteers came together to help during the Covid Emergency was fantastic and shows that people in this town care about others. There is now a better community spirit and we came together to help each other.

One of the most interesting parts of last year was when the High Sheriff, Patricia Thomas, came to Leominster for a socially distanced visit to the Tourist Information Centre, Leominster Museum, Grange Court, Forbury Chapel to meet the About Face Theatre Group and on to the Foodbank to see all the good work supporting residents in need.

As I have been Mayor for two years, I have summarised the achievements of the town council by committee.

BULLET POINTS:**Full Council 2019/20**

- Hosted The Rifles Freedom of the Town Event;
- Successfully applied for Heritage Action Zone funding in association with Herefordshire Council;
- Facilitated Team Leominster weekly operational meetings and monthly tactical meetings;
- Secured an Open Spaces Grant from Herefordshire Council to purchase mowing equipment to enable the Grounds Team to begin verge maintenance in town;
- Oversaw the Remembrance Day commemorations, in partnership with the Royal British Legion Leominster Branch;
- Provided Christmas Lights and the Christmas Tree for the Town;
- Organised the Christmas Light Switch On Event;
- Oversaw other Civic occasions during 2019/20.

Full Council 2020/21

- Contributed to the upgrade of CCTV provision in the Town Centre;
- Worked with Leominster COVID-19 Volunteer Group, Community Wheels and Herefordshire Council to support vulnerable residents to obtain medication and shopping supplies during the COVID-19 pandemic. This included setting up a virtual work platform so that these organisations could work together, providing a telephone contact line 7 days a week and organising volunteers to support residents;
- Moved to remote meetings on Zoom with funding acquired from the Fastershire Keep Connected Fund;

- Continued to facilitate weekly Team Leominster operational meetings and monthly tactical meetings remotely;
- Working towards our Armed Forces Covenant Silver Award;
- Representing Leominster by engaging in county initiatives eg. The Market Town Investment Plan;
- Launching a new accessible Leominster Town Council website;
- Oversaw a very different COVID safe Remembrance event;
- Provided the Christmas Lights and Christmas Tree in the town centre;
- Continued to administrate two local charities.

Environment & Services Committee 2019/20

- Continued to undertake footpath maintenance under the P3 scheme;
- Continued to undertake limited Lengthsman duties under the Herefordshire Council scheme;
- Supported Leominster in Bloom to gain the Gold Award by carrying out watering of planters and spraying/street cleaning;
- Introduced a business waste recycling scheme in 2019/20 with Binit Ltd as the main partner;
- Commencement of the Grange Open Space Master Plan consultation with a topographical survey;
- Undertook playground inspection in house;
- Located a new Depot from which the extended Environmental team can operate more easily;
- Continued to provide over 100 allotment plots for local residents;
- Provided help support and sandbags during the February flooding.

Environment & Services Committee 2020/21

- Continued to undertake footpath maintenance under the P3 scheme;
- Successfully gained a grant for £10,240 to enable drainage works in the rural areas of the parish that have been affected by flooding;
- Refurbished and relocated the Environmental Team into the new depot;
- Kept the allotments open during the COVID-19 pandemic and offering flexibility with inspections and rent collection;
- Continued support for Leominster in Bloom including watering, spraying and planter sponsorship;
- Enabled the public toilets on Central Car Park and The Grange to remain open for residents albeit in a reduced capacity to enable additional sanitisation, within COVID-19 guidelines;
- Continued verge maintenance with COVID-19 precautions to keep staff and the public safe.

Finance & General Purposes Committee 2019/20

- The provision, under a Service Level Agreement, of a part time curator for Leominster Museum;

- Overseen staff recruitment via the Personnel Sub-Committee;
- Carried out a budget consultation with residents;
- Budget development for 2019/20. Final increase was 4.1%;

Provided Grant support for the following organisations:

Citizens Advice Bureau	£8000.00
LDCA Community Centre	£8,000.00
Replacement bus service	£1,500.00
Leominster Festival	£1000.00
Window Competitions	£250.00
Duke of Edinburgh Licence fee	£1050.00
Leominster Priory Holiday Club	£900.00
Children's Events	£500.00
LARC	£7000.00
HVOSS children's art sessions	£920.00
Polish Memorial Service	£200.00
Free Parking Small Business Saturday	£1,079.00
Shopmobility	£1,000.00
Everybody Dance	£982.00
Veterans Project PPE	£270.00

Finance & General Purposes Committee 2020/21

- The provision, under a Service Level Agreement, of a part time curator for Leominster Museum until December 2020;
- Carried out a budget consultation with residents at the weekly market and via Survey Monkey;
- Overseen staff recruitment via the Personnel Sub-Committee;
- Budget development despite a large decrease in the precept. The final increase was 4.25%.

Provided Grant support for the following organisations:

HVOSS Youth activities	£3000.00
New Leaf Youth activities	£3500.00
Walkers are Welcome	£100.00
Community Wheels	£775.00
Civic Society	£529.62
Herefordshire Wildlife Trust	£935.00
Leominster Meeting Centre	£1000.00
Leominster Polish Society	£600.00
LARC	£7000.00
ECHO	£907.00
NILS	£250.00
LDCA Community Centre	£8,000.00
Citizens Advice Bureau	£8,000.00

Communications & Events Committee 2019/20

- Continued to oversee the Friday Market and the monthly Farmers Markets;
- Continued to manage the Tourist Information Centre providing information to visitors, an opportunity for local producers to sell their products and to promote local tourist focused businesses;
- Provided the Stables Gallery, an opportunity for local artists to showcase their work;
- Overseen the final elements to the holiday flat including the fire safety works, a new gas supply and final furnishings. The flat opened in June 2019;
- Supported the Small Business Saturday with the provision of free car parking in Leominster funded by Leominster Town Council;
- Put on the third “Through the Wardrobe” event in the Secret Garden;
- Hosted the Christmas Light switch on event.

Communications & Events Committee 2020/21

- Continued to oversee the Friday Market and the monthly Farmers Markets;
- Continued to manage the Tourist Information Centre and enabled allotment payments to be taken by phone to comply with COVID-19 regulations;
- Completed the LEADER funded Signage Project including new Welcome Signage, Visitor Information Signage, new fingerposts and interpretation signage around the town;
- Developed a Cultural Programme with partners to run alongside the High Street Heritage Action Zone Project;
- Created “Through the Wardrobe” windows instead of an event due to social distancing regulations;
- Held weekly and farmer’s markets when able, for essential items during the pandemic restrictions;

- Enabled the Tourist Information Centre to trade as click and collect and became a distributor for Herefordshire Council Green Waste bags;
- Obtained grant funding from the Herefordshire Community Foundation to enable local organisations to work quickly and collaboratively to support those in desperate need by procuring one central shared database for volunteer and support data. This has allowed us to connect vulnerable residents with a range of different support services, in a joined-up and holistic way;

Planning & Highways Committee 2019/20/21

- Submitted comments on planning applications to Herefordshire Council;
- Submitted comments on licencing applications;
- Submitted comments on tree works to trees in the Conservation area or with Tree Preservation Orders attached, to Herefordshire Council;
- Councillors have made site visits for applications for building works and site visits by the Tree Officers for works to trees;
- Continued to report defects to Balfour Beatty and lobby Herefordshire Council regarding highway and parking matters;
- Considered a possible Neighbourhood Plan Review;
- Started the process to set up a Community Speedwatch Group;
- Been involved in the consultations of local Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO's).

The next year, as we emerge from the pandemic following the government road map will see lots of exciting projects such as:

- The early projects of the High Street Heritage Action Zone such as town Wifi and footfall counters for the town;
- The design and consultation of the Re-imagination of Corn Square and the wider public realm;
- Grants to restore historic buildings within the Conservation Area;
- A cultural programme of events to run alongside the Heritage Action Zone;
- The continuation of the Grange Masterplan project with refurbishment of the play area as a priority;
- Projects coming from the Market Towns Investment Plan;
- The refurbishment of The Grange and Central Car Park Public Toilets.