

LEOMINSTER TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Leominster Town Council Meeting held on Monday 18th May 2020 commencing at 19:00 hours remotely via Zoom.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillors Thomas (Mayor), Rumsey (Deputy Mayor), Bartlett, Davies, Herschy (19.11), Marsh, Marshall, Murdoch, Norman, Parris, Rosser, Smith-Winnard, Williams and Williamson(19.21).

OFFICERS PRESENT: Town Clerk.

ALSO PRESENT: Ward Cllr Stone and one member of the public.

01/20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

02/20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

03/20 REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

No requests for dispensation had been received.

04/20 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

One member of the public was present. The following matters were raised:

- As an allotment plot holder with two plots on his third season at the allotments and after 9 weeks of dry warm weather, the plot is still wet making growing very hard. This has been happening for some time and various utilities have been on site, when will a solution be found?
- When will the Town Council brash be removed from the car park?
- When will the pothole at the top of Etnam Street at the junction with South Street be filled?
- When will the dip in the road in West Street be dealt with?

The clerk replied that a Water Contractor had been asked to carry out a camera survey to find out why the water is still flowing and this would be chased up. The other matters would be investigated and the member of the public would receive a response from the clerk as soon as possible.

05/20 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Council **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Leominster Town Council meeting held on 27th January 2020 be agreed and signed as a correct record when social distancing regulations are lifted by central government.

Minute 90/19 – it was requested that the Proposed motion regarding a 20 mph speed limit in Leominster be put on the agenda to be discussed in full at the next Full Council meeting on 27th July 2020.

Minute 95/19 – it was noted that there was no further change in the Planning and Phosphates issue in the River Lugg.

06/20 CLERK'S REPORT

Council noted the following Clerk's Report:

- (a) **Replacement of 11 Corn Square immersion heater and associated heating works** – Council noted that this work was required in order to ensure that the heating and hot water system was more efficient and safe. It was requested that the clerk obtain a further two quotes to cover all of the work, including replacement radiators and valves.

07/20 COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Council approved the minutes of the following meetings held and ratified the decisions and recommendations made:

- Cllr Prosser, Chair of the Planning & Highways Committee, presented the minutes. It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the Planning & Highways Committee held on 3rd February 2020, 2nd March 2020 and 4th May 2020 and to authorise the decisions and recommendations contained therein;
- Cllr Rumsey, Chair of the Communications & Events Committee, presented the minutes. It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the Communications & Events Committee held on 10th March 2020 and to authorise the decisions and recommendations contained therein;
- Cllr Murdoch, Chair of the Finance & General Purposes Committee, presented the minutes. It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held on 24th February 2020 and 27th April 2020 and to authorise the decisions and recommendations contained therein;
- Cllr Herschy, Chair of the Environment & Services Committee, presented the minutes. It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the Environment & Services Committee held 16th March 2020 and to authorise the decisions and recommendations contained therein.

The following matters were raised:

- Minute FG44/19(a) No response had been received from the complainants regarding the complaint about The Grange open space consultation.
- Minute FG45/19(c) The wording should read 'recommend adoption by full council'

08/20 FINANCES

- (a) **Accounts Paid Statement** – It was **RESOLVED** to ratify the payment of invoices for April/May 2020, as outlined on the payment statement provided.
- (b) **Risk Register** – The updated Governance and Management Risk Register was presented by the clerk, with all amendments tracked. It was agreed that the clerk should identify actions for RR6 Emergency Cover before the document is adopted.

09/20 REPORTS

The following reports were received:

- (a) **COVID-19 Response Summary** – The council noted the report.

Date: 12/05/2020

On 31st January 2020, the UK recorded its first confirmed cases of coronavirus. By March 11th 2020, the global coronavirus outbreak had been declared an international public health emergency by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and by 17th March 2020 the UK Government had imposed a ban on all non-essential public access. Schools across the UK were closed from the end of the day on 20th March 2020, with limited provision provided for children of essential key workers.

On 17th March 2020, Town Council staff began working with Team Leominster partners and the COVID-19 SOS Volunteer Group to develop a co-ordinated response to the COVID-19 crisis in Leominster. The aim was to put in place a robust system for connecting offers of volunteer support with individuals who were vulnerable or in self-isolation.

The Leominster COVID-19 Community Response Scheme went live on 20th March 2020. A central telephone contact point was provided for incoming enquiries, with calls managed by staff from HVOSS Community Wheels and Leominster Town Council. Telephone lines have since been manned from 8am-6pm on weekdays and 3pm-6pm on weekends (with lines also remaining open on public holidays). Details of the Support Scheme were publicised via the Town Council website and social media accounts, with information also circulated by email and hard copy leaflets (delivered by volunteers). An initial group of volunteers were recruited by the COVID-19 SOS Volunteer Group, to provide support with grocery shopping/deliveries, prescriptions, Food Bank pick-ups, pet care, and telephone befriending. Volunteers registered with the COVID-19 Community Response Scheme were issued ID badges (designed by the

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COVID-19 SOS Volunteer Group) and were offered hand sanitiser and disposable gloves – supplied by Leominster Town Council and Herefordshire Council. New volunteers were invited to register via the main helpline number.

Herefordshire Council deployed Talk Community Link Workers to support the COVID-19 Response in Leominster from 20th March 2020. A county-wide support line was launched shortly afterwards. Town Council staff have been working alongside the Talk Community Link Workers allocated to Leominster, with regular meetings taking place via video-conferencing. Calls from Leominster residents that are received through the Herefordshire Council support line are referred into the Leominster COVID-19 Community Response Scheme via the Talk Community Link Workers.

Town Council staff have worked closely with the Leominster Food Bank to develop a system for making referrals using e-vouchers. Regular referrals are also made to other local support services, including Leominster NILS, Leominster Baptist Church, and volunteer support schemes in neighbouring parishes. Town Council staff have also made contact with all care homes in Leominster, to ensure that they have adequate supplies of PPE. Updates on local COVID-19 support and safeguarding measures are shared via the Town Council website, social media accounts and Leominster News contributions. Email updates are also circulated to Councillors and Team Leominster Partners.

In response to the need to coordinate a growing number of volunteers, Leominster Town Council staff have developed a central volunteer database that allows representatives from both the Town Council and COVID-19 Support Scheme partner organisations to securely access and amend volunteer data while working remotely. As well as storing contact details, the database also records information on volunteer availability and DBS status, which is essential given that only volunteers with DBS clearance are permitted to pick up prescriptions. We are very grateful to the Herefordshire Community Foundation and the NET Coronavirus Appeal Fund for a grant of £216 to help fund the software licences required to manage the COVID-19 Volunteer database for a 6-month period (from April – Sept 2020). An additional grant of £111.90 was received from the Fastershire 'Keep Connected' Fund, to cover the cost of telephone forwarding software for the Town Council Office phone line and an extended Zoom licence for use in Council and Committee meetings.

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The Leominster COVID-19 Community Response Scheme currently has 90 registered volunteers, covering all areas of Leominster and many of the surrounding villages. Analysis of call log data has enabled us to identify areas of the town where support requirements are highest and to put in place plans for ensuring that volunteer coverage is sustained in these areas, as lockdown measures are reduced and a larger number of residents are required to return to work. Town Council staff have also been exploring ways to ensure that information about the available volunteer support is reaching those people who are self-isolating without access to computers or the internet. Support flyers are being distributed with deliveries from local supermarkets and from 18th May 2020 a bookmark promoting the Leominster COVID-19 Community Response will be distributed by local pharmacies dispensing prescriptions within Leominster and surrounding villages/parishes. Production costs for the bookmark have been covered by a further funding grant from the NET Coronavirus Fund.

Council also noted the following Ward Councillor reports:

Leominster South Ward Report for 18 May – Cllr Trish Marsh

Things are happening both so fast and so slowly! Thank goodness for:-

- Leominster's green spaces that give nearly all of us the chance to get out safely
- Big hearted volunteers, backed by the LTC and HC helplines
- Link officers from Herefordshire Council specifically for Leominster
- Relatively low rates of infection – let's hope that stays the same as the tests increase and we get a more accurate picture
- Online platforms that help us stay in touch
- Good weather and spring.

Herefordshire is responding positively, especially as a massive 1 in 3 of our population, including all over 70s, are defined as clinically vulnerable and instructed to minimise contact with those outside their immediate household. Thank goodness they are allowed out to exercise daily – a boost for physical health! And now can receive outside visitors at a 2 metre distance to help keep spirits up. Thanks to all at home for their forbearance and thanks to all the volunteers, family and friends who are keeping them supplied with what they need. We look forward to seeing them again soon – the over 70s are so important to our many community groups, charity shops and high street businesses.

Of course we are missing the businesses on our High Street and elsewhere. I've set up a Facebook page called Leominster Independent

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Shops. Several are open and many more are offering online services, so there is more going on than is at first apparent! I've increased my Facebooking in general and appreciate the local FB groups that get information out quickly to many.

I'm very glad the town council is having virtual meetings. The House of Lords, average age 70, are following our lead! Zoom turns out to be easier than I expected and, although it is a platform designed for work, is also useful for other purposes. Families and all sorts of local groups are finding ingenious ways to keep in touch. Obviously it's not perfect and some meetings with poor connections are frustrating – but it is a major help for keeping in touch.

Herefordshire Council continue to strengthen their work with partners and are helping provide GPs, care homes and parish councils with PPE to reduce infection risks. Thanks to Leominster Town Council for their vital role, working closely with the community sector who organise volunteers and run the Foodbank. Helplines remain open and there is lots of useful information on the Herefordshire Council website re grants for businesses and council tax payments.

Leominster Household Refuse Site is now open 7 days a week with a queuing system round the carpark. So far it's going well thanks to people not all rushing at once and doing their best to minimise waste/compost and so on.

This outbreak has given us all a chance to reflect on what is most important to us. A recent YouGov poll shows that the public feel health and wellbeing is more important than economic growth just now and a majority want the government to focus on quality of life after the pandemic has subsided. Of course it is important to have enough money to meet our needs. In Leominster that is a stretch for many people who have insecure and low paid work, which may now be at further risk. We need to combine our skills as we puzzle out what the new normal will be like and face the many challenges it will bring us. We will be working together, both at Herefordshire council level and right here, to deliver a recovery that increases quality of life, for instance better insulated homes that are cheaper to heat, and find ways to revitalise our high street, learn new skills and support our local businesses and food producers.

Report from Councillor Felicity Norman (Cabinet portfolio – Children and Families)

Things have changed dramatically since our January meeting, with the main focus being on addressing the Covid crisis. The two primary concerns for Herefordshire Council have been to 1.) keep council staff safe, so that 2.) we can protect vulnerable people.

Meetings have continued virtually, with Cabinet meeting at least twice a week, with officers where appropriate and with updates on the present situation for all parts of the council, and its work with the wider

community. Other meetings of the planning committee, scrutiny committee etc. are also beginning to take place virtually.

Hereford Council, Leominster Town Council and our community with its network of wonderful volunteers, have come together to provide support for those in need of help with shopping, medication, information and advice, and sometimes just a reassuring chat. They have also worked with Leominster food bank to ensure that no one goes without food or other essentials, including supporting schools in their provision of free school meals for those entitled. They have all done a fantastic job, and deserve our very grateful appreciation.

Children and Families staff continue to do an excellent job, in spite of ongoing difficulties, together with our schools, foster carers, and partners in family support. Our schools and other settings continue to stay open, including over the Easter holiday, to support vulnerable children and those of key workers. This has included ensuring that children entitled to them, receive Free School Meals, as well as those facing more recent hardship, in spite of contradictory government advice and difficulties with accessing vouchers.

Staff tasked with safeguarding responsibilities, continue to visit and contact (sometimes virtually) those children and young people in our care, together with our partner organisations who provide family support. In spite of legal changes to expectations, our staff are making every effort to work to usual standards.

Social workers and school safeguarding leads are in regular contact with vulnerable children, encouraging them to attend school, although it is a matter of concern that, although numbers are improving, far too many are still not in school, in spite of efforts being made. I am concerned about the difficulties of working at home for many children, space, quiet, lack of equipment etc. and the vulnerabilities of children who should be in school and may be exposed to exploitation of some kind. All efforts are being made to address these concerns.

Ward concerns have been few; those raised recently have included continued flytipping at Barons Cross Camp, and across the road on the A44. Also, antisocial behaviour at Buckfield, and poor footpath signing from the Rugg.

Ward Update Cllr Jenny Bartlett Leominster East

This is a very testing time for all of us and has meant that we have all had to find different ways of working. Herefordshire Council working meetings have all moved now onto online platforms such as Zoom and Webex, so this is a steep learning curve for everyone. Public meetings such as Scrutiny Committees are now gearing up to follow suit.

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Herefordshire Council are providing support to residents via Talk Community, here in Leominster in partnership with the Town Council. There are business grants, help and advice as well as help with council tax available (see the newsletter for further details).

Before the lockdown I have been involved with:

- Quarterly members BBLP briefing at Kingsland Depot to hear about this year's annual plan.
- Members briefings on Planning Enforcement and Treasury Management.
- In February Full Council set the counties budget and council tax.
- In March council approved the parish precepts, H&W Fire and WM Police contributions, which taken altogether make up our combined council tax bill.
- I attended the first of the newly revamped Market Town Forum meetings at Hereford Town Hall. It is good to see these meetings have resumed.
- I am involved in two task and finish working groups, one looking at governance within the council and the other looking at the waste contract which will be due for renewal soon. As with everything they are gradually moving to online meetings to continue the work.
- The Adult and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee met to consider the NHS Continuous Health Care support for residents with complex health needs, as well as the CCG performance monitoring report.
- I also attended the Health and Wellbeing Board meeting.
- The Friends of Leominster Library AGM did manage to go ahead, but unfortunately we had to cancel the Fundraiser talk by Alf Jenkins.
- Likewise the Rail users group's AGM has had to be postponed now until further notice.
- I attended the last Leominster Community Centre Tuesday Lunch club in February, as well as the last management committee meeting for the foreseeable future. The Community Centre is in good shape but like everyone this will be a financial headache. The foodbank continues to operate from here and they are doing an outstanding job across town, delivering food as well as holding 'pop up' food share events to try and make sure everyone who needs food can access it.
- I would also like to say a huge thank you to Julie, Liz, Jackie and Lena for all the work they are doing behind the scenes. A big thank you too for Mark and his merry environmental team who are out looking after our town still.
- April has been the month of full lock down. Like the town council and many others, we have been transitioning to working online via zoom and webex. Fortunately the IT people responded straight away to the challenges of remote and home working and we were up and running very quickly.

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- Talk Community, Herefordshire Councils support response to covid-9 has been a huge success and the four ward members have held weekly zoom meetings with our Talk Community link workers and Town Council.
- Whilst much of my time has been taken up with the Covid-19 response, business continues apace and Herefordshire Council are now starting to hold public cabinet, scrutiny and planning committee meetings.
- I am part of two task and finish groups; one looking at our governance system within the council and the other looking at the waste and recycling contract for the county. All these meetings and workshops have been online and it does show how well we can adapt to new challenges.
- It was pointed out at the joint waste contract and climate change workshop that our travel carbon footprint had been greatly reduced through remote working, which can only be a good thing.
- Care homes are very much in our thoughts at the moment as they are rapidly becoming the 'front line' of covid-19. Herefordshire Council was one of the earliest to step up its support to care homes within our county. Daily support calls and supply of PPE to all care homes in the county has eased the risk factors they are experiencing here.
- The re-opening of the household waste recycling centre went smoothly and all credit to our officers who worked so hard to make it as safe as possible.
- The VE Celebrations on my street were a welcome distraction from the lock down and we had a wonderful socially distanced tea party along the street. Unfortunately, being Bank Holiday our weather did manage to disrupt the proceedings with rather a lot of rain at 4pm on the dot!

Ward Report Leominster North & Rural – Cllr John Stone:

Congratulations on your debut as Town Clerk, Julie in such stressful times.

Coronavirus Crisis

This has dominated everything over the past 7 weeks and Town councillors have received numerous reports and updates. Amy Pitt's latest information from Talk Community Covid-19 response is that they have so far received 3,000 phone calls, at one point 180 a day and have been in touch with many vulnerable people. The majority of requests have been for supplies and medical collections. Calls reached 180 a day but are now down to 50 a day. This weekend is the last for their telephone service but people can still phone them from 9am to 5pm Mondays to Fridays. Phone number 01432 260 027. They are providing an invaluable service.

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Here in Leominster a big thank you to the Town Council, Community Wheels, the Food Bank and the army of volunteers who have all been providing wonderful support to the community since the lockdown began. Adrian Turton and Lorna Williamson from Herefordshire Council have been liaising with everyone and dealing with requests from the various wards in and out of town. Many thanks to the 90 or more volunteers who have been collecting prescriptions, delivering groceries and other supplies and keeping in touch with those who are shielded. The Food Bank has been outstanding with 400 food bags distributed over the Easter period. Their support for families and children on free school meals has been brilliant and with so much extra need expected in the weeks ahead I hope everyone who can will continue to supply the Food Bank. They still receive regular donations from Brimfield and other villages.

One final message. Please don't delay seeking medical attention if needed. Local residents who have been attending Hereford Hospital recently tell me of the excellent treatment and attention they have received. A&E attendance has been substantially down since the outbreak began.

Household Refuse Centres

A phased re-opening started on Saturday May 9th. I received a small but steady number of requests from residents for the centres to be re-opened and Leominster and Hereford sites are open for business. So far all has gone very smoothly with a well-managed queuing system at the Leominster site. The first weekend was very quiet but there were 17 vehicles waiting to go in on Wednesday when I visited. The message remains to only go when essential and when you have unavoidable waste that you can't store safely at home. This seems to have been accepted and the much feared long queues have not so far materialised. Many thanks to Herefordshire Council and Severn Waste Services for handling the situation so efficiently and residents have appreciated the re-opening. Many of us were concerned by reports of fly tipping which might have worsened if the sites had stayed closed much longer. There is no excuse for fly tipping now. Please report fly tipping to Balfour Beatty on 01432 261800.

Balfour Beatty update

I was delighted to see the re-marked white lining at the Bridge Street mini roundabout. The lines had become so faded the roundabout was becoming very dangerous. The new white lines have made a big difference and along Mill Street too. Balfour Beatty have made the most of quieter roads and dry weather to catch up on pothole repairs and gully cleaning especially in the villages like Kimbolton and Brimfield. The jetpatcher has been out and about and I have noticed the difference. There are still large potholes that need filling in the town and I hope the locality stewards are following these up. Several have been marked in Mill Street so I await action there. Overall the number of surface defects has sharply reduced since the wet winter so BBLP are catching up. Several road repair schemes are currently held up due to

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the emergency. The Government has just announced an extra £1.7b for local roads safety, priority bus lanes, air quality improvements and electric car charge points so we will wait to see how much of this comes to Herefordshire.

A49

Highways England will be closing part of the A49 overnight between May 18th and July 3rd to carry out resurfacing, drainage work and kerbing between Ashton and the OK Diner roundabout. I have all the details if anyone needs them. In addition, there will be resurfacing work on both the Leominster and Ludlow Bypasses this summer.

Conspicuous by its absence is any work at the notorious Salwey Arms junction at Woofferton. Highways England just say they are monitoring it! Meanwhile work will soon be completed on the new (and totally unnecessary) petrol station near the Salwey junction. It will be an accident waiting to happen. The new right hand turning at Ashford Bowdler again nearly finished has cost £ 777.000.

Flooding issues, flood recovery funding, Bellwin money, drainage schemes. I will provide a separate special report in the next week or so.

VE and VJ Days

It was a great disappointment to be unable to commemorate VE Day on May 8th in the way we all wanted. Nevertheless the Two Minutes Silence at 11am was very moving and in Brimfield and elsewhere there was plenty of bunting on display and flags flying everywhere. I spotted several tea parties around the village with social distancing of course. There was singing and music and the whole day lifted the spirits, much needed. Many of us joined the Nation's Toast " for those that gave so much, we thank you." I hope by VJ Day in August more of the restrictions will have been lifted so that we can commemorate in a much more social and community way. Our veterans deserve nothing less. As Her Majesty said, "We will meet again."

Finally, please stay safe and well as we begin the slow lifting of some of the restrictions. My thanks to fellow Ward Members, the Town Council, Herefordshire Council officers and staff for all they continue to do for our County and our local community.

10/20 MAYORAL APPOINTMENTS AND DEPUTY MAYORAL APPOINTMENTS

Council noted no Mayoral appointments had been attended by the Mayor or Deputy Mayor due to the current COVID-19 pandemic and the associated social distancing restrictions.

11/20 ANNUAL TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

In light of new regulations and in response to disruption caused by the COVID-19 crisis, councillors were requested to consider the following options in regards to the Annual Council Meeting:

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- a) to hold the Annual Council meeting (remotely) on a date agreed before the end of May 2020.
- b) Postpone the Annual Meeting of the Council until May 2021

Following discussion and consideration of the two options, it was proposed by Cllr. Thomas, seconded by Cllr. Davies and unanimously by the councillors and **RESOLVED** to:

Postpone the Annual Meeting of the Council until May 2021 and retain all current appointments within the council (i.e. Office of Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Chair and Vice-Chairs of Committees, Committee membership and representation on outside bodies to continue in place).

It was then proposed by Cllr. Thomas, seconded by Cllr. Parris, voted unanimously by councillors and **RESOLVED** to put the Mayor Elect arrangements for 2021 on the agenda at the next full council meeting on 27th July 2020.

12/20 CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

As certain items to be discussed included the consideration of exempt information, Full Council **RESOLVED** that, in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded during the discussion of the matters referred to in the items listed below, on the grounds that they would involve the likely disclosure of exempt information, as defined in the respective paragraph of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, and the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

- (a) **Civic Awards** – Council agreed that as so many people had participated in voluntary work to help support the vulnerable in the community, rather than give out individual awards, a celebration of the community work could be organised, possibly in 2021.
- (b) **Grant Funding Application** – Council **RESOLVED** to award a grant of £775 towards the costs of maintaining the Community Wheels minibus for a period of 3 months.

13/20 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Council noted that the next Town Council Meeting would be held on Monday 27th July 2020 commencing at 19:00pm either remotely via Zoom or at the Council Offices, 11 Corn Square, Leominster HR6 8YP depending on social distancing regulations being relaxed by central government.

There being no other business the Mayor thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting at 20:50pm.

MAYOR:

DATE: