

LEOMINSTER TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Leominster Annual Town Council Meeting held on Monday 24th May 2021 commencing at 19:00 hours in the John Abel Room at Grange Court, Pinsley Road, Leominster HR6 8NL.

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

OFFICERS PRESENT: Town Clerk, Democratic Services Officer.

ALSO PRESENT: Ward Cllr Stone and 1 member of the public.

08/21 ELECTION OF TOWN MAYOR FOR THE 2019/20 CIVIC YEAR

Council ratified the decision made, at the Leominster Town Council Meeting held on Monday 27th July 2020, that Cllr. Rumsey be elected Mayor of Leominster for 2021/22.

09/21 DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE

Council **RECEIVED** Cllr. Rumsey's Declaration of Acceptance of Office as the newly elected Mayor of Leominster.

10/21 ELECTION OF DEPUTY MAYOR FOR THE 2019/20 CIVIC YEAR

Council ratified the decision made, at the Leominster Town Council Meeting held on Monday 27th July 2020, that Cllr. Marsh be elected Deputy Mayor of Leominster for 2021/22.

11/21 DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE

Council **RECEIVED** Cllr. Marsh's Declaration of Acceptance of Office as the newly elected Deputy Mayor of Leominster.

12/21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr. Marshall (Work) Cllr. Parris (Personal) and Cllr. Preece (Work).

13/21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made.

14/21 REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

No requests for dispensation had been received.

15/21 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC (maximum 15 minutes)

There were no questions from the member of the public.

16/21 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

Council **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Leominster Town Council meeting held on 5th May 2021 be agreed and signed as a correct record.

Council **NOTED** the draft minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on Monday 19th April 2021. These would be formally adopted at the next Town Meeting to be held in April 2022.

17/21 CLERK'S REPORT

Council noted the following Clerk's Report:

- The Everybody Dance rig has been installed in The Secret Garden. There will be a 2 week programme of events involving local schools;
- The government has launched the Welcome Back Fund to support the return to high streets safely and help build back better from the pandemic. The proposed budget per market town is £20000. Funding is available for the following activities:
 - provision of hand sanitiser stations;
 - signage to ensure safe flow of people in market town centres; and
 - maintenance of public conveniences (toilets) including new temporary facilities (toilets) provision in market town centres.
- The clerk has emailed Building Control regarding concerns raised in respect of the condition of The Royal Oak.

18/21 APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEES

Council **RESOLVED** to appoint the following Committees in line with the Council structure, to assist in conducting the business of Council:

- Planning & Highways Committee
- Environment & Services Committee
- Finance & General Purposes Committee
- Communications & Events Committee

19/21 APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Council **RESOLVED** to appoint the Members listed below to sit on the following Committees:

PLANNING & HIGHWAYS COMMITTEE (11 MEMBERS)

Cllr. Rumsey (Mayor)
Cllr. Marsh (Deputy Mayor)
Cllr. Bartlett
Cllr. Herschy
Cllr. Rosser
Cllr. Thomas
Cllr. Williams
4 vacancies

ENVIRONMENT & SERVICES COMMITTEE (11 MEMBERS)

Cllr. Rumsey (Mayor)
Cllr. Marsh (Deputy Mayor)
Cllr. Bartlett
Cllr. Davies
Cllr. Herschy
Cllr. Murdoch
Cllr. Norman
Cllr. Smith-Winnard
Cllr. Sutcliffe
Cllr. Williamson
1 vacancy

FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE (11 MEMBERS)

Cllr. Rumsey (Mayor)
Cllr. Marsh (Deputy Mayor)
Cllr. Bartlett
Cllr. Davies
Cllr. Marshall
Cllr. Murdoch
Cllr. Norman
Cllr. Sutcliffe
Cllr. Williams
2 vacancies

COMMUNICATIONS & EVENTS COMMITTEE (9 MEMBERS)

Cllr. Rumsey (Mayor)
Cllr. Marsh (Deputy Mayor)
Cllr. Murdoch
Cllr. Smith-Winnard
Cllr. Sutcliffe
Cllr. Thomas
3 vacancies

20/21 APPOINTMENT TO OUTSIDE BODIES

Council **RESOLVED** to appoint the following Council representatives to represent Leominster Town Council on Outside Bodies:

OUTSIDE BODY	APPOINTED REPRESENTATIVES
Market Towns Forum (3 positions)	Cllrs. Rumsey and Marsh, 1 vacancy
Herefordshire Association of Local Councils (1 position)	Cllr. Rumsey
Leominster District Community Association (2 positions)	Cllr. Thomas, 1 vacancy
Leominster Festival Committee (1 position)	Cllr. Bartlett
Shopmobility (1 position)	Cllr. Rumsey
Grange Court Management Group (LARC) (1 position)	Vacant
Leominster in Bloom (2 positions)	Cllrs. Marsh and Murdoch
Fairtrade Group (1 position)	Cllr. Norman
Leominster Town Football Club (1 position)	Cllr. Rosser
S&A produce Liaison Group (2 positions)	Cllrs. Marsh and Thomas
Janice & Peter McCaull Trust (Positions appointed to 2023)	Cllrs. Norman, Rumsey and Thomas, Town clerk
Armed Forces Covenant	Cllr. Thomas
P3 Footpath Officer	Cllr. Herschy
Tree Officer	Cllr. Smith-Winnard
HSHAZ	Cllrs. Rumsey, Thomas, C&E chair, Town clerk, Projects & Grants Officer
Herefordshire Green Network	Cllr. Sutcliffe
Rural Services Network	Cllr. Bartlett
ECHO Vol. Group	Cllr. Smith-Winnard
Potential Leominster Business Group	Cllrs. Sutcliffe and Thomas

21/21 INSURANCE COVER

It was **RESOLVED** that annual insurance cover for the Town Council for 2021/22 currently provided by Zurich Municipal Insurance be confirmed.

22/21 ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

Council **AGREED** to ratify Council's annual subscriptions to the National Association of Local Councils, Herefordshire Association of Local Councils, the Society of Local Council Clerks, the National Association of British Market Authorities, Hereford Green Network, Rural Services Network and any other subscriptions as considered appropriate.

23/21 FINANCES

Accounts paid and invoices for payment - It was **RESOLVED** to ratify the payment of invoices relating to April 2021, as outlined on the payment statements provided.

24/21 MAYORAL CHARITY FOR 2021/22

Cllr. Rumsey announced that he would be supporting 2 charities during his mayoral year:
Services For Independent Living and Marches Family Network.

25/21 REPORTS

The following reports were received from the Herefordshire Council Ward Members:

Leominster North Ward Report from Ward Cllr. Stone

Council noted the following report:

It will be good to see everyone again in person in Grange Court on Monday. I fully endorse the tribute from The Mayor on behalf of the people of Leominster upon the death of HRH Prince Philip and I mentioned his outstanding service in my Councillor's report in this month's Leominster News. The Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme is not the least of his many achievements, benefitting thousands of young people.

My thanks to the Mayor Cllr Clive Thomas for his two years of service during difficult and exceptional times and for chairing all those zoom meetings. I think he deserves a break! I shall have an opportunity to congratulate the new Mayor and Deputy Mayor after they have been elected. Many thanks to Julie Debbage for all she has done as Town Clerk this year, taking over just as we went into the first lockdown but handling everything so efficiently and always being so cheerful and ready with help and advice. Nothing is too much trouble.

Flood alleviation schemes

These have been going ahead to improve the River Kenwater flood wall in Osborne Place and at The Mallards. I have been trying to arrange a site visit with Toby Whitehouse of the Environment Agency to view the scheme creating a new flood embankment along the River Lugg which is due to be completed this month. It has not been possible to arrange so far due to adverse weather but I am particularly interested in landscaping and tree planting there. Nearly 300 properties should be better protected due to this work in The Mallards and Ridgemoor and I hope to report further on both schemes at the next Town Council meeting. Flooding was a major problem in Leominster historically as the excellent board outside Broad Street car park reminds us. The town is in a much better situation now but with the climate emergency we cannot afford to relax and this is why I welcome the two schemes being carried out by the Environment Agency.

Balfour Beatty update

Road repairs remain a sore point for many residents in and around Leominster and although Balfour Beatty are catching up on some of the backlog of potholes and blocked drains from the winter they have not been helped by the late frosts and the high rainfall levels we have experienced this month. I have been arranging socially distanced parish tours with Lee Fishwick, Leominster North locality steward and will let local Town Councillors know when a tour is arranged in Leominster. In the meantime please report potholes and blocked drains on Herefordshire Council website or phone Balfour Beatty on 01432 261 800 to report the defect. Please give the exact location to avoid wasting time searching for it. A photo also helps. Keeping on top of Herefordshire's 2,000 miles of roads is a major challenge as Council budgets continue to be squeezed. Please also report fly tipping whenever and wherever it occurs. Just leaving it encourages other to dump more rubbish. This anti-social activity needs to be addressed and in my view the enforcement is too weak and the penalties too lenient.

Covid roadmap and vaccinations

This week has seen the welcome reopening of hotels, restaurants, theatres, cinemas, museums and much indoor hospitality. Cafes and pubs have done a great job with outdoor hospitality but it is more enjoyable to drink your tea or coffee indoors when the rain is lashing down. There has been a buzz again in the market towns since shops and hairdressers reopened in April. The advice is to proceed with caution during this third stage of the roadmap. I enjoyed my first visit to the barber since December on April 13th.

The week ending May 8th saw Covid case rate in Herefordshire at 24.9 cases per 100,000, a decrease on the previous week, although cases are bound to fluctuate from week to week. Hospital admissions also remain thankfully low. The successful vaccine roll out continues with the NHS inviting people aged 37 and over to book their jab. Over 100,000 Herefordshire residents have received their first dose and many their second dose of the vaccine. Who would have believed a year ago that over 36 million people would have received one of three effective vaccines?. It is really important that people attend their second dose appointment. Vaccines are ordered according to the booked appointments to make sure the right vaccine is available for you at the right location on the right day. Many thanks for the efficient operation at Bridge Street Leominster and to the many cheerful and willing volunteers on hand to assist.

Regular rapid testing is now available to everyone and localised outbreaks such as at a fruit farm are actively managed. Test kits can be obtained at pharmacies. Due to low attendance the Leominster Testing Centre for people with symptoms in Broad street car park will be replaced with a mobile testing unit which will be rotated between Leominster and Ross-on-Wye.

It will be good to see small numbers of spectators at cricket and football matches and at other outdoor sports soon, but many restrictions will stay in place as the virus has not gone away and the Government needs to keep following the medical and scientific data. It is always going to be a difficult balance as we emerge from three damaging but necessary lockdowns.

Herefordshire 24/7 Mental Health Helpline

The number has changed to Freephone 0808 196 9127. Available to people of all ages and provides support and signposting to anybody struggling with mental health problems. Mental health awareness week was last week with the theme of connecting with nature. Country walks and outdoor activity was encouraged which improves mental and physical health.

Finally

Many thanks to all the local groups and organisations who have helped us through the lockdowns from the displays brightening the town from Leominster in Bloom, Community Wheels for providing essential transport, the Leominster News for publishing every month and the Food Bank which has helped so many families and individuals. Let's hope we can soon enjoy the anniversaries and services in The Priory and the social events that keep the community together and even some summer holidays and staycations in the months ahead.

Leominster South Ward Report from Ward Cllr. Marsh

Council noted the report contained in the agenda.

Cllr. Marsh added that the council should encourage residents to participate in the online survey in respect of the proposed new doctors' surgery. The clerk will check if there is a link on social media (Facebook) which can be notified to local residents.

Leominster West Ward Report from Ward Cllr. Norman

Council noted the following report:

Looking back at my 2019 report, reminds me of how much has changed since then. At the time I was commenting on the early days of the new Council, and the range of events I was attending as deputy leader and as Cabinet Member for children and families.

There have been hardly any of those opportunities this past year, which has seen all our activities severely limited by Covid, and few if any events have been taking place. As we now cautiously move out of lockdown, we look forward to having more visitors and to more public events being organised with sensible precautions in place.

The Council and public alike have been shocked and disturbed by the findings of a recent court judgement strongly critical of Herefordshire Children's Services, and their work with families with children in care. Immediate action is being taken, beginning with an assessment of current cases, which has indicated that there is no immediate cause for concern. However, further external reviews will follow, including a thorough, independent review of our Children's Social Care Services to get to the root of any problems and to highlight the changes needed.

My focus is on ensuring we make the changes needed to give us all confidence in our Children's Services and the legal services we work with. Some changes have taken place within the service, including the resignation of the Director and the appointment of an interim Director, Cath Knowles, a qualified and registered Social Worker, to provide professional experience, leadership and assurance for the coming months. Our Social Workers continue to do their best, often in very difficult

circumstances, to support families and protect vulnerable children in our community. We will ensure our staff have the support they need and the confidence and commitment to report any concerns as we make significant and lasting improvements.

My intention is that we not only address the immediate issues of concern but that in the longer term we work towards providing an excellent service that we can be truly proud of. We are working closely with, and receiving support from the LGA, Ofsted, the DfE and other regulators, and will be setting up an Improvement Board to coordinate and monitor the changes needed.

Phosphates in the River Lugg continue to delay any significant development in the north of the county, including the large development at Barons Cross Camp. We are working with the planning officer to challenge the current plans, and get the best possible quality housing, open spaces, play area, planting and access.

Leominster Improvement Plan and the Heritage plans continues to progress, although frustratingly slowly. Lots of interesting ideas coming forward, but putting them into practise will be a challenge, especially at the rate things seem to be moving. Both have huge potential benefits for the town, and in spite of delays, will significantly improve the town centre, making it an attractive destination for both visitors and residents, and boosting the local economy.

The long awaited replacement of our two doctor's surgeries, and the development of a health hub for the town, is coming a step closer with the commitment from the NHS to provide the necessary funding. This is a great opportunity to improve both capacity and conditions for patients and employees with a new, state of the art building, and we hope that the delays caused by the phosphates will not seriously impact on this development.

Cllr. Norman added that the council should make the public aware of what the current system is regarding Covid vaccinations. The clerk will write to the Wye Valley Trust to find out who is currently organising the roll out of the vaccinations.

Leominster East Ward Report from Ward Cllr. Bartlett

Council noted the report contained in the agenda.

Cllr. Bartlett added that she had been chasing up queries regarding The Royal Oak. Cllr. Bartlett advised that the enforcement notice on the building has lapsed and that another building inspection needs to be carried out as the building is dangerous.

Cllr. Bartlett also added that she will be attending a Rural Services Network meeting on 26th May 2021 to find out how other councils are dealing with health and wellbeing issues.

Cllr. Thomas (outgoing Mayor)

Council noted the following report:

By the time you read this I will have handed over to my deputy on May 24, but there will not be the usual mayor making, as current restrictions will not allow this, but the council hope to hold the ceremony in September.

I have been mayor for two years and took part in several functions during the first part of 2019. Then we went into lockdown, when everything went into lockdown, and everybody had to stay at home and work from home if possible. This was when the Town council came into its own.

Thanks to our exceptional town clerk, and her staff, the telephone lines were diverted to mobiles and as part of the Covid-19 response, along with Marina Morris of Leominster Covid-19 response, and Community Wheels ,Leominster food bank and in excess of 100 volunteers maintained a service delivering prescriptions, medications, shopping and food parcels to members of the public who were not able to go out.

For a small town the community spirit came into play. Our new young friends, who moved in one month before the pandemic, did our weekly shopping. THANK YOU to all the volunteers and our staff who answered the phones 7 days a week, including the evenings, and the Town council did the administration and kept the records.

We managed to perform one civic function which was in the brief interlude between the two lockdowns. We hosted a visit of Patricia Thomas, the High Sheriff, and she visited us for all day visiting many businesses, shops, food bank and several charities.

26/21 CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

CLERK'S REPORT

Council noted the following confidential items from the Clerk's Report:

- The clerk has received a request to attend a meeting on 10th June 2021, with Ward Councillors and Herefordshire Councillors, to discuss the potential devolved asset;
- The Projects & Grants officer has completed a draft to tender for a grant, from Historic England, to complete a feasibility study on the potential devolved asset.

There being no other business the Mayor thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting at 20.10 hours.

MAYOR

DATE: