

# LEOMINSTER TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Leominster Town Council Meeting held on Monday 26<sup>th</sup> July 2021 commencing at 19:00 hours in the Council Chamber, 11 Corn Square, Leominster HR6 8YP

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

**OFFICERS PRESENT:** Town Clerk, Democratic Services Officer.

**ALSO PRESENT:** Ward Cllr Stone, a member of the press and a member of the public.

The meeting was slightly delayed whilst other councillors entered the Council Chamber following the Planning & Highways Committee meeting. The meeting commenced at 19.07.

## **37/21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Rosser (Work).

## **38/21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made.

## **39/21 REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS**

No requests for dispensation had been received.

## **40/21 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

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

- **Full Fibre Telegraph Poles** – Concern was expressed regarding the installation of telegraph poles on the Buckfield estate by Full Fibre. There are no other services above ground and the resident stated that the installation of the poles will be visually detrimental to the appearance of the estate. The resident also advised that Full Fibre had failed to notify the residents regarding the installation.

Cllr Norman advised that the council has tried to ensure that there has been consultation. However, there has been a lack of communication from Full Fibre who have advised that it is a permitted development. A number of poles have been moved where they have been particularly intrusive.

## **41/21 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

Council **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Leominster Town Council meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2021 be agreed and signed as a correct record.

**42/21 CLERK'S REPORT**

Council noted the following Clerk's Report:

- **Civic Awards** – these will be presented at the Mayor Making ceremony on 25<sup>th</sup> September 2021. Nominations for the awards should be sent to the Mayor or office administrative assistant by the beginning of September 2021;
- **Clerk's National Conference** – the clerk will be attending the conference on 13<sup>th</sup> / 14<sup>th</sup> October 2021;
- **Planters** – the clerk has obtained 10 planters from Balfour Beatty that were used in Hereford as part of COVID -19 social distancing measures. The planters will initially be placed in the Secret Garden and arrangements will then be made to place them on tree pits around the town.

**43/21 FINANCES**

(a) **Accounts Paid and Invoices for Payment** – It was **RESOLVED** to ratify the payment of invoices for June and July 2021, as outlined on the payment statements provided.

(b) **Income & Expenditure Report Month 3** – Council **RESOLVED** to accept the Income & Expenditure Report for Month 3 and accompanying notes.

It was noted that a cement mixer is due to be purchased and Arrow Plant & Tool Hire will be refunding the charges made for the hire of a cement mixer.

**44/21 REPORTS**

The following reports were received:

**Cllr Thomas – Shopmobility**

The council noted that Shopmobility have continued to provide services throughout lockdown due to help from volunteers. Shopmobility will be holding a sale of donated equipment, including walking sticks and frames, at Leominster Farmers Market on 14<sup>th</sup> August 2021 from 10am.

**Leominster North Ward Report from Ward Cllr Stone**

The council noted the following report:

**Chief Executive's Visit to Leominster**

The Council's new Chief Executive Paul Walker visited Leominster on July 7<sup>th</sup> as part of his tour to become familiar with all parts of the county. I met him with Cllrs Trish Marsh and Jenny Bartlett at the MAO and we took him on a whistle stop walkabout concluding with a meeting with Stephen Dale and Dr Fisher at the proposed new site for the Leominster Primary Care Centre. This will be one of the most important developments for Leominster and the surrounding area for years with the relocation of the current surgeries from their very cramped and congested site. Some aspects of the earlier proposals might have to wait for a later stage but the scheme is looking very promising. Paul Walker will be in touch about the next steps, timing and

planning issues after further talks with Simon Trickett of Herefordshire and Worcestershire CCG but the Dales site will have many advantages including space and access and I hope we will hear more in due course. Paul Walker later met The Mayor in Corn Square.

#### Full Fibre and the telegraph poles controversy

A less happy episode has been the sudden and unwelcome installation of masts in various parts of the town to herald the roll-out of Ultrafast Broadband. This culminated in an unscheduled public meeting in Osborne Place with nearly 50 residents on Thursday June 24<sup>th</sup>. The lack of consultation and indeed any warning about the new masts had caused outrage in Osborne Place, Millers Close and other parts of Leominster. I was grateful to Cllrs Trish Marsh, the Mayor, Paul Davies and Wayne Rosser joining me which helped to reassure the residents that we all shared their concerns. I wrote to Full Fibre on June 27<sup>th</sup> and they replied promptly, pausing the roll-out but only for a short time. We asked why the fibre could not have been installed underground. Full Fibre replied that it was not commercially viable, that three to six months of road closures would have been involved, it was easier to carry out maintenance with overhead poles and they were environmentally friendly by not adversely affecting wildlife. They admitted that they should have communicated with residents but were happy to engage with residents individually about the location of some of the poles.

The controversy is still rumbling on with many residents far from convinced that overhead poles should be foisted on their estates and to some extent I agree with them. Faster broadband will be needed in the future although some residents tell me they do not want it anyway.

I think we need to engage with Full Fibre but they cannot leave it to the Councillors to act as their messengers. Simply putting notices on the poles is not what I would call communication with residents. At the same time, I deplore any abuse or worse of their engineers and the Police should be notified of these incidents. I will meanwhile continue to pass on residents' concerns to Full Fibre and Fastershire.

#### Covid Update

The lifting of most restrictions on July 19<sup>th</sup> was welcomed by some, especially in hospitality and concerned others as cases continued to rise but the majority view was to remain cautious and vigilant. Many shops and businesses continue to encourage face coverings and social distancing, although not mandatory. We need to consider others as well as ourselves. The beginning of school holidays may slow down some of the transmission which has been particularly prevalent among younger unvaccinated people recently including teenagers.

In Herefordshire the case rate up to July 17<sup>th</sup> was 277 per 100,000, an increase on the previous week although the figure for England was 529 per 100,000.

86% of adults in the county have had their first vaccination and over 70% their second dose. Drop-in clinics are now available in Hereford for those 18 or over for first or second vaccination doses. There is no need to book, just turn up. Dates and times are on the Council website. It is vital to accept invitations for second vaccinations.

Home testing kits are available in the market towns or can be ordered on line for home delivery.

I hope the Government will extend the exemption from self-isolation to more groups of key workers if they have had BOTH vaccinations or the so-called “ pandemic “ will become lockdown by another name.

### Free Swimming Lessons

I welcome this initiative as part of Herefordshire Council's Covid Recovery Plan. Children have suffered from months of disruption to their education and social life. Over 1 million were off school last week. HALO are offering free swimming lessons in the summer holidays at all 4 swimming pools which will be important for life skills as well as healthy exercise and improved wellbeing.

There is also a Holidays Activities Programme for primary and secondary children eligible for free school meals. They can book for 16 hours of free activities per week for up to 4 weeks. Each child who attends will also receive a free healthy meal during the session. These can be booked through the Talk Community website.

### Planning. Good News !

Herefordshire at last has achieved a 5 year housing land supply. Congratulations to all concerned for their hard work. It will come as a huge relief to parish and town councils. All adopted Neighbourhood Development Plans now have full material weight when planning applications are determined, regardless of the date they were adopted. Good news for Brimfield and Little Hereford who were one of the first parishes to hold a referendum on their NDP. They have faced increasing pressure with planning applications recently due to the lack of the 5 year supply as have other parishes. The review of the Core Strategy should proceed more easily now. Work continues to try to resolve the phosphates situation.

### Flooding webinar

A flooding webinar is taking place on Thursday August 12<sup>th</sup> via zoom from 6.30pm to 7.30pm. It is open to all parish councils. The issues include preparing for, responding to and recovering from flooding in Herefordshire. The Environment Agency and the Fire and Rescue service will be taking part. The webinar can be joined by contacting [ResilienceTeam@herefordshire.gov.uk](mailto:ResilienceTeam@herefordshire.gov.uk).

The recent flooding in Germany, China and elsewhere ensures that flooding locally as well as globally should remain high on our agenda.

Finally, I wish everyone who is able to go on holiday a peaceful August and to those staying at or near home, to continue to enjoy our wonderful countryside. Please continue to support our local shops, cafes and businesses many of whom supported us during the three lockdowns.

Cllr Stone added that recycling centres will remain appointment only over the next few months.

### Leominster South Ward Report from Ward Cllr Marsh

The council noted the following report:

Herefordshire Council's new chief Executive, Paul Walker, visited Leominster very recently. We were pleased to be able to show him the site where we hope the new GP surgery will be built to replace the town's undersized and out of date facilities and

to show him the downside of the A44 as it wends its way through Leominster. Our mayor and clerk then showed him the town centre streets and public realm.

The requirement for council decision making meetings to be in person has caused considerable difficulty and expense as well as risks to those with vulnerabilities. This was true especially for HC's full council meetings, which involved over 60 people. In blessed contrast, Leominster Town Council meetings fit neatly in Grange Court's John Abel room and 11, Corn Square for smaller meetings. It has been a pleasure to start to see people in person again – and I hope we will all continue to take precautions to support safe opening up.

I much appreciated attending the first public concert at the Priory, attended by over 100 people, all wearing masks. In the further return of cultural events, Hereford College of Arts were able to mount their full range of end of year shows. Leominster Festival went well and I'm delighted the rain held off for their big green family fun day on the Grange. The service for 50 years of Westfield Special School was very poignant. Consultation on the proposed closure of their Sixth form is still open on the HC website. A welcome study is also underway on the replacement of Westfield School's buildings, which do not meet current standards. Westfield, together with ECHO, make a massive difference to the quality of life of those living with learning difficulties in North Herefordshire.

**Economic Recovery** – HC Cabinet recently approved a £6.144m Covid Recovery Plan, including a wide range of activity to support the economy and the wellbeing of local people as we look to build back a greener, fairer society for all. The plan includes some innovative ideas to incentivise local residents to get back out socialising, spending time with friends and family, getting active and supporting local businesses. There is support for businesses to start up and grow, and help and advice for those that are seeking new jobs or to re-train. The plan will help continue the excellent business led visitor economy marketing and PR campaign when the current LEP funding ends in July. This includes a new Alfred Watkins trail, which comes through Leominster. Further details of this cabinet decision and report can be found at: [Decision - Covid 19 Recovery Plan - Herefordshire Council](#)

**Discretionary Restart Grant** –the Covid 19 Discretionary Restart grant launched in mid May and received applications from over 800 businesses. HC confirm that we met the government target of spending the latest £1.7m tranche of Additional Restriction Grant funding well ahead of the end of June deadline. This will trigger a further £1.7m of support. The council are currently reviewing if further grant payments can be made to businesses impacted by the extension of the lockdown restrictions (night clubs, travel agents etc.) following a recent change to government's guidance for funding.

Leominster Town Council have been offered the chance to take over the Old Priory building from Herefordshire Council, who no longer have staff based there. This is subject to the significant hurdle of building a credible business case to cover its maintenance backlog and running costs in the new few weeks. Ideas are sought to

make good use of this large and important historic building and find income streams to keep it in public ownership and delivering benefits for the town and visitors.

I have taken on two additional responsibilities: representing the county on the Pensions Board for Herefordshire & Worcestershire and becoming Vice Chair of Adult Scrutiny.

### **Leominster West Ward Report from Ward Cllr Norman**

The council noted the report contained in the agenda.

### **Leominster East Ward Report from Ward Cllr Bartlett**

The council noted the following report:

Since the end of May I have been moved into two new roles on Herefordshire Council following a midterm reorganisation. I am now the Cabinet Support member for Adults and Communities and have been supporting Cllr Pauline Crockett. In August Cllr Felicity Norman will take over the cabinet member role and I look forward to continuing my support to Felicity.

At the same time, I have stepped down from my role as Vice Chair of the Adult and Wellbeing Committee and now sit on the Audit and Governance Committee. This is quite a steep learning curve but a very important part of ensuring that Herefordshire Council is acting in a proper and transparent manner.

Over the last two months there have been a number of all member briefings. A really useful multi agency training session from SOCJAG (Serious and Organised Crime Joint Action Group) on tackling such things as county lines; the final Re-Governance workshop on Herefordshire Councils proposed constitutional changes to strengthen scrutiny, member training and public engagement; a Counter Fraud Briefing will take place at the end of the month.

I attended an interesting additional workshop on dialogues around Covid-19 vaccinations, 'Vaccine Leaders Training'. Understanding people's fears and reservations about getting vaccinated, fears of side effects and young people's concerns with fertility and pregnancy were important themes.

I attended the most recent BBLP Quarterly Members briefing to receive updates on the annual plan roll out and maintenance. I hope that the emphasis on drainage work this year will guard against some of the worst impact of flooding we are likely to get with more extreme weather as a result of climate change. There was also an emphasis on the riparian responsibilities of landowners and ditch maintenance, very important in our rural areas.

BBLP now produce a monthly statistical newsletter for ward members with a number of key volumes of work, for example 2,710 defects were repaired in June this year. This brings into focus just how much of a backlog of defects there are now, if we are fixing this volume each month but still not seeming to make any inroads into the overall state of the roads and infrastructure in the county.

Together with my fellow ward members, we spent an afternoon whisking our new CEO Paul Walker around Leominster to show him some of the opportunities and pressures that we have here. Opportunities included a site meeting at Mill Street to

see the new health hub site, green open spaces, schools and independent shops. Pressures included the Air Quality Zone at Bargates, traffic and state of our roads. Thank you to Cllr John Stone for providing sandwiches and strawberries for us all, and we managed to get him back to the town council offices on time to meet the mayor and to visit the Food Bank and Talk Community hub.

Talk Community delivered another positive Parish Council Summit which focussed on strengthening our partnership work with parishes. There were some very honest exchanges about what works well and what hasn't worked well in that partnership. A positive outcome is setting up the Parish Charter working group to put this partnership back onto a firmer footing. This is timely as the old charter that set our how we work together is now ten years old.

I attended the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust AGM in July, they have been our new mental health provider partner in the county since April 2020. Taking over from 2Gether NHS Trust at the start of the covid-19 lockdown and first wave has been a double challenge for the new service. There are some really positive opportunities rolling out with the community health teams at the local level now as well as some much needed investment into the Stonebow Unit at Hereford Hospital.

#### **45/21 MAYORAL APPOINTMENTS**

Council received the following appointments attended by the Mayor:

- Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> June – Leominster Festival Event
- Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> June – HSHAZ Steering Group meeting
- Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> June – Farmers Market
- Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> June – HSHAZ Steering Group meeting
- Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> June – Raising the flag for Armed Forces Day
- Friday 25<sup>th</sup> June – ECHO event (The Old Priory)
- Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> June – Balfour Beatty walk around town
- Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> July – Festival Market
- Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> July – Annual Big Street Pub Quiz
- Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> July – Big Green Family Fun Day
- Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> July – Leominster Festival service (The Priory)
- Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> July – Birmingham Philharmonic Orchestra (The Priory)
- Monday 5<sup>th</sup> July Royal Edward Lodge (Freemasons) for NHS
- Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> July – HSHAZ Steering Group meeting
- Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> July – Queen's Canopy meeting with Deputy Lieutenant
- Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> July – Meeting with Chief Executive of Herefordshire Council
- Friday 9<sup>th</sup> July – Meeting the public (Council Chamber)
- Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> July – Health & Safety meeting (Council Chamber)
- Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> July – Coffee and cake morning (The Secret Garden)
- Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> July – Mayor's meeting (Hereford Town Hall)
- Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> July – Shopmobility Annual General Meeting

Ward Cllr Stone, the member of the press and the member of the public left the meeting.

**46/21 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) An update on the Armed Forces Covenant Award**

- Council noted that Leominster Town Council has been selected for a Silver Award under the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme.
- Council thanked Jackie Whittall and everyone involved in obtaining the award.

**(b) An update on the Potential Devolved Asset**

- Council noted that the business case is progressing and Herefordshire Council have offered more time to complete the case. Cllr Bartlett suggested contacting Talk Community and the Market Town Regeneration Fund to check whether any funding is available. Crowdfunding is currently being investigated to raise funds for the project.

**47/21 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Council noted that the next Town Council Meeting would be held on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> September 2021 commencing at 19:00 hours in the Council Chamber, 11 Corn Square, Leominster HR6 8YP.

There being no other business the Mayor thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting at 20.15 hours.

**MAYOR:** \_\_\_\_\_ **DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_