

Clerk to the Council/RFO: Caroline Higgins
Chairman: Cllr Tim Ryan

Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held at 7.00 pm on **Monday 27 January 2020** in the Memorial Hall.

Present: Cllrs Ryan; Hudson; Clode; Clarke; Whittall; Wright; Gouge; Robinson; Howells; Underwood; and Jones;

In attendance: Caroline Higgins, Clerk

130.19/20 **TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES AND REASONS FOR ABSENCE – None**

131.19/20 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –** Cllr Whittall declared her interest in the football pitches, which are hired by her son-in-law.

132.19/20 **PUBLIC SPEAKING/QUESTIONS AT COUNCIL MEETINGS –** There were no members of the public present. Cllr Clarke spoke to object to the recording of meetings but was reminded by the Chair that the law was unequivocal and that recordings may be made by any person, as noted in the minutes of the meeting held on 4 November 2019. It was confirmed that no recording was taking place at this meeting.

133.19/20 **SHROPSHIRE COUNCILLOR'S REPORT –** Cllr Clarke reported on the activities of Shropshire Council. He outlined ongoing budget concerns and the delay to the announcement of the central government settlement for local authorities, due to the recent general election.

The budget for highways winter maintenance has been significantly reduced to support adult social care but the Council has agreed to review the budget for youth provision. A multi-agency approach is being used to tackle county lines and other drug related concerns.

He reported that the Council was developing an energy audit and focusing on efficiencies to try to become more sustainable.

He reported that New Pulley Lane would be closed in March for surfacing repairs and that the flooding on Old Pulley Lane would be drained to ensure residents could use that route safely. It was suggested by Cllr Jones that the speed limit on New Pulley Lane be reduced from 50mph as it is likely that speeds will increase once the surface is repaired. Cllr Clarke observed that Shropshire Council Highways had previously indicated they would not reduce the mandatory limit below 50mph without

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the co-operation and enforcement by the police which was unlikely to be provided in the current financial climate.

He commented on the extension of grazing compartments for Dexter cattle on Lyth Hill and confirmed that the new fencing was designed only to prevent the cattle straying and not to exclude visitors. Pedestrian gates were installed to give free access to the grazing fields.

134.19/20 **CHAIR'S REPORT** – Cllr Ryan offered his apologies for cancelling the meeting in December at very short notice. He acknowledged this had caused difficulties with approval of payroll and thanked those Councillors who had attended an emergency meeting to approve the payments.

He also spoke about the ongoing technical difficulties being experienced by many members of the Council with respect to the new email accounts. He noted the recommendation that all members be supplied with a dedicated Office 365 Business Essentials email account but contended it would not resolve the problems and would have a cost implication for no benefit. He proposed that the Clerk continues to use the new email address and upgrades to Office 365 Business Essentials at a monthly cost of £3.80 with an annual commitment, but that members revert instead to using their own private email accounts and to review their own security arrangements. Cllr Hudson seconded the motion and it was **unanimously resolved**. It was further resolved to inform the community via the next Villager article but not to publish members' personal emails.

It was noted that outsourcing of payroll was unlikely to save the Clerk any time unless time sheets could be submitted electronically. It was resolved not to pursue this option at this time.

135.19/20 **MINUTES** – It was unanimously resolved to defer this item and Agenda item 136.19/20 Clerk's Report until after discussion of items 137.19/20 Appointment of Auditor; 138.19/20 Budget Setting and 139.19/20 Precept setting to ensure sufficient time was given to these important debates.

136..19/20 **CLERK'S REPORT & MATTERS ARISING** - Deferred

137.19/20 **APPOINTMENT OF INTERNAL AUDITOR** – The Council considered the report and quotations circulated with the agenda. The Council resolved to appoint Mrs Diane Malley to audit the Council for the year 2019 – 2020 at a cost of £250 for two visits and to write a letter of thanks to Mrs Hackett for her valued services over a number of years.

138.19/20 **2020 – 2021 ANNUAL BUDGET**

The Clerk presented an updated budget report which had been circulated to members since the meeting of the Finance Committee held on 20 January 2020. An updated worksheet was displayed by projector as a live document for discussion and approval.

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The Council noted a small number of calculation errors that had been identified in the spreadsheet which reduced the forecasted underspend and consequently increased the estimated Precept requirement by £3,165.26.

A number of amendments were made to the administration budget to take account of decisions made by the Council and Finance Committees which had the effect of reducing the required Precept by £900.

The Council noted that the largest budget movements were recommended in staff costs and in the allocation of new reserves. It was therefore **resolved to exclude the press and public under LGA 1972 ss 100 (2), so as to discuss Confidential staff matters.**

After some discussion it was **resolved** to reduce the budget for staff costs by £24,419.20. Four members abstained.

It was noted that a report from the Staffing Committee on a benchmarking exercise was awaited and that the minutes of confidential meetings should be shared with the Full Council to enable them to reach an informed decision.

It was resolved to develop an office handbook to assist a locum in case of the absence of the Clerk.

At 8:59pm Cllr Whittall proposed an extension of time to enable the business on the agenda to be completed. This was resolved unanimously. As discussions of confidential matters had been concluded the meeting was reopened to the press and public. There was nobody present.

It was unanimously resolved to set an expenditure budget of £177,562 for the year 1 April 2020 - 31 March 2021.

139.19/20 **2020 – 2021 ANNUAL PRECEPT**

It was **resolved to allocate £10,000 from the CIL Neighbourhood Fund Reserve** to offset the costs of the proposed pavilion car park extension and phased development of new exercise rooms, subject to clarification of costs and the approval of Shropshire Council.

It was subsequently resolved unanimously to set a Precept Demand of £167,562 for the year 2020 – 2021.

It was noted that the Precept represents an increase of £14,927 on the 2019 – 2020 Precept and translates to a Band D Equivalent Tax Base of £92.96 per annum, or £1.79 per household, per week.

140.19/20 **MINUTES – The Council resolved unanimously** to approve as accurate the minutes of the Full Council meetings held on 4 and 18 November 2019

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and to adopt the signed minutes of the Planning Committee meetings held between May and November 2019.

At 9:20pm Cllr Clarke left the meeting.

141.19/20

AUTHORISATION OF PAYMENTS

The Council considered a schedule of invoices becoming due for payment, together with confidential staff salaries and statutory deductions for January, all of which were **unanimously approved** for payment.

In accordance with **Financial Regulation 7.2**, the Council granted by **unanimous resolution** delegated authority to the Clerk to arrange payment of salaries and payment of deductions from salary such as may be required to be made for tax, national insurance and pension contributions, or similar statutory or discretionary deductions, in accordance with the payroll records and on the appropriate dates stipulated in employment contracts, provided that each payment is reported to the next available council meeting, as set out in these regulations above.

It was **resolved** that any such payments will be subject to countersignature by two authorised cheque signatories, with actual amounts being reported to the next appropriate meeting.

142.19/20

CLERK'S REPORT & MATTERS ARISING

The Clerk clarified that the date arranged for defibrillator training is 19 February rather than 19 January as shown in the Clerk's Report. Cllrs Robinson and Wright confirmed their intention to take part in the training with three members of staff.

Remaining spaces will be made available to regular users of the Lythwood sports facilities and residents of the village free of charge upon request to the Clerk.

At 9:25pm the Chairman announced his resignation from the Council with immediate effect and that he would confirm his decision to the Clerk in writing.

Cllr Underwood proposed a vote of thanks for the Chairman's contribution to the Council and this was **unanimously resolved**. In light of the announcement the Clerk announced an extraordinary meeting would be called on Monday 10 February at 7pm to elect a new Chair.

The meeting closed at 9:30pm