Ludlow Annual Town Residents Meeting

MINUTES

Minutes of a meeting of the **ANNUAL TOWN RESIDENTS MEETING** held at the Methodist Church, Broad Street, Ludlow on **MONDAY 1st JUNE 2026** at **7.00PM**

ATM/01 PRESENT

Mayor:	Councillor Lyle
Councillors:	Addis; Cowell; Harris; Maxwell-Muller; Owen; Parry; Tapley; Taylor
Officers:	Gina Wilding, Town Clerk Kate Adams, Deputy Town Clerk Kim Pickford, Communications & Marketing Officer Helen Jones, Senior Administrative Assistant Charlotte Ambrazas, Cemetery Officer
Unitary Councillors:	Parry
Members of the public:	27
Apologies were received from:	Cllrs Childs, Gill, Ginger and Hepworth.

ATM/02 WELCOME FROM THE MAYOR

The Mayor of Ludlow, Councillor Lyle, welcomed everyone and shared some housekeeping and safety arrangements.

ATM/03 PRESENTATIONS FROM GRANT RECIPIENTS

The Chief Executive Officer of Ludlow Assembly Rooms provided an overview of the organisation's activities and the benefits of the Town Council's core grant funding. She highlighted the wide range of cultural events offered, including film, music and theatre, and explained that grant funding had helped support a ticket subsidy scheme, enabling reduced ticket prices and increased accessibility. During the year, around 3,000 people attended ticketed events, and 11 primary schools attended the Christmas pantomime. Plans for the coming year include developing further partnership projects with Ludlow College and Ludlow Library.

The meeting also heard how Town Council funding supports the Visitor Information Centre, which is based within the Assembly Rooms. Volunteers

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provide visitor information six days a week and offer guidance on local attractions, services and destinations across Ludlow and the surrounding area. During the previous year, the centre recorded approximately 24,000 enquiries from residents and visitors.

Representatives emphasised the significant contribution made by volunteers to both the Assembly Rooms and the Visitor Information Centre. Volunteers support a wide range of activities and events and were recognised as valued ambassadors for the town.

ATM/04 The band's founder provided an overview of Ludlow Concert Band, which was established in 2009 with the support of a Town Council grant. The band has grown into a well-established community organisation and continues to perform at civic, community and fundraising events across Ludlow and the surrounding area. The band welcomes musicians of all ages and abilities and provides opportunities for local people to participate in music-making and develop their skills.

The meeting heard that Town Council core grant funding helps to meet the band's ongoing operational costs, enabling it to continue providing performances, supporting community events and contributing to the cultural life of the town. Members and musical directors volunteer their time, and the band remains committed to serving the local community through music and charitable fundraising activities.

ATM/05 One of the Directors and Trustees of Ludlow Piano Festival provided an update on the festival's continued growth and success since its inception. He highlighted the festival's ability to attract internationally recognised performers, and noted that many artists are keen to return following their positive experience of performing in Ludlow. The festival aims to celebrate the piano through a varied programme of concerts, community events and public performances, while also attracting visitors to the town and supporting the local economy.

ATM/06 **LUDLOW TOWN COUNCIL PRESENTATIONS AND QUESTIONS**

GRANT FUNDING

In 2025/26, Ludlow Town Council awarded:

£1,050 Ludlow Concert Band
£750 Ludlow Piano Festival
£1,000 Ludlow Hockey Club
£1,000 South Shropshire Youth Forum
£5,000 Ludlow Assembly Rooms
£5,000 Visitor Information Centre
£1,800 Project Support Grants

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Project Support Grant Applications are accepted all year.

THE TOWN COUNCIL'S VISION

Ludlow is a successful and vibrant town where people want to live, work, and visit.

WRITTEN QUESTION FROM RESIDENT

Question 1:

Will the Mayor and Deputy Mayor affirm their whole-hearted personal support for Ludlow to remain an inclusive community: a town that recognises, welcomes and actively supports the diversity of our local residents?

Answer:

Yes.

ANNUAL REPORT

The Annual Report for 2025/26 was released at the meeting and is available on the council's website and here.

PROJECTS 2024/25

- Henley Helpers community volunteer programme.
- Ludlow Town CCTV.
- Shaping Lives recipe folder project.
- Guildhall Chamber audio system.
- New and refurbished bus shelters.
- Ludlow Market new website.

CHURCHYARD WALLS UPDATE

Councillor Lyle confirmed that Ludlow Town Council and St Laurence's PCC have agreed to work together, in partnership with the Ludlow Town Walls Trust, to progress the restoration of the Town Wall adjacent to St Laurence's Churchyard. Initial steps will include appointing structural engineers to prepare a specification of works, obtaining quotations, seeking the necessary permissions, and exploring potential grant funding opportunities. It was noted that cost estimates are not yet available. The council, the PCC and the Ludlow Town Walls Trust all recognise the importance of actions such as these for the community and economy of Ludlow. The intention is to help to

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secure the heritage, and further to enhance the reputation, of our historic town.

YOUNG PERSONS WORK PLACEMENTS

The Town Council continues to support young people through outdoor work placements, providing opportunities to develop practical skills, confidence and valuable work experience while contributing to the local environment.

COMMUNITY REMEMBRANCE

The VJ Day remembrance at Ludlow Castle was highlighted as a successful community event, bringing residents together to remember and reflect on a significant historical moment.

ATM/07 UPDATES FROM COMMITTEES AND TASK & FINISH GROUPS

POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE

An update was received from the Chair, Councillor Owen.

Councillor Owen provided an update on the work of the Policy and Finance Committee over the past year. This included a review of Council policies, expenditure, insurance arrangements, governance procedures and Standing Orders. He also reported on work undertaken to improve transparency and public access to financial information, together with reviews of Freedom of Information procedures and Council processes through dedicated Task and Finish Groups. Councillor Owen advised that this work had contributed to improved financial management, governance and operational efficiency.

BUDGET TASK & FINISH GROUP

An update was received from the Chair, Councillor Taylor.

Councillor Taylor provided an update on the work of the Budget Task and Finish Group, explaining that its role is to review the Council's budget and reserve levels and make recommendations to Full Council. He advised that the Group had recommended maintaining the 2026/27 precept at its current level. This was made possible through measures including increased income from market stall rents and improved returns from funds placed in higher-interest accounts.

Councillor Taylor also outlined the purpose and categories of earmarked reserves and reported that the Group had not identified a need to increase reserve levels. He confirmed that the Budget Task and Finish Group would continue its work during the current year.

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SERVICES COMMITTEE

An update was received from the Chair, Councillor Cowell.

The Services Committee continues to oversee a wide range of Council services and projects. During the year, progress was made on improvements to the town's CCTV system and developments at Henley Cemetery, including upgrades to paths and planned resurfacing works. The Committee also responded to challenges relating to litter collection and is considering future arrangements in light of local government reorganisation and potential service devolution. The importance of the town market, parks, open spaces and playgrounds was highlighted, together with the valuable contribution made by volunteers who support environmental improvements and the maintenance of community assets across Ludlow.

CLIMATE ACTION TASK & FINISH GROUP

An update was received from the Chair of the Climate Action Task & Finish Group, Councillor Maxwell-Muller.

The Council continues to implement its Environmental and Climate Action Plan, with a focus on reducing its environmental impact and enhancing biodiversity across the town. Initiatives during the year included changes to hedge and grassland management to support wildlife, the development of a wildflower meadow at Sidney Road Green, and the establishment of a community orchard on Weyman Road with support from local school pupils. The Council is also encouraging reduced verge mowing and less reliance on chemical weedkillers, while continuing to engage with residents on environmental issues and future projects.

COMMUNICATIONS TASK & FINISH GROUP

Councillor Maxwell-Muller also gave an update on the work of the Communications Task & Finish Group.

The Council continues to prioritise effective communication with residents. During the year, improvements were made to the Market and Ludlow Museum websites, the Buttercross Bulletin, and the Council’s social media presence, with further enhancements to the Town Council website planned. A new strapline, “Looking after Ludlow’s Future”, was also introduced. In March, the Council launched a public survey to gather residents’ views on Council services and future priorities, and it was noted that the feedback received would help inform future work and engagement activities.

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REPRESENTATIONAL COMMITTEE

An update was received from the Chair, Councillor Harris.

The Representational Committee continues to represent the interests of Ludlow residents on a wide range of matters, including planning, highways, transport, licensing and external consultations. During the year, the Committee reviewed and commented on approximately 130 planning applications and related matters. Key issues included the impact of road closures on residents and businesses, and concerns regarding vacant and neglected buildings within the town centre. The Committee's work helps ensure that the views of the Town Council and local community are represented in decisions affecting the future of the town.

STAFFING COMMITTEE

An update was received from a member of the committee, Councillor Lyle.

The Council employs 19 members of staff who deliver a wide range of services to the community. Staff turnover remains relatively low, providing continuity, experience and stability across the organisation. During the year, changes within the Direct Labour Force team included an internal promotion and the recruitment of two new members of staff. The Staffing Committee continued to oversee recruitment and staffing matters, while also supporting staff training, development and wellbeing.

ATM/08 QUESTIONS FROM RESIDENTS AT THE MEETING

Question: A resident asked for further information about the Council's grant scheme, including the level of funding available and the reasons why some applications are unsuccessful.

Response: It was explained that the grant criteria are published on the Council's website. Core grants are awarded annually, with a maximum award of £5,000 per application, while project support grants are available up to £1,000. Any organisation meeting the published criteria may apply. Details of grant decisions, including reasons for unsuccessful applications, are recorded in the Council minutes and are publicly available.

Question: A resident expressed concern about the condition of King Street, noting that the road surface may present a risk to pedestrians, and asked if there was anything the Town Council can do to expedite works.

Response: It was reported that the issue has been raised on a number of occasions with Shropshire Council. The meeting heard that works to King Street, together with High Street and Brand Lane, are currently anticipated to

commence in September or October 2026, following the completion of scheduled events requiring access through the town centre.

Question: A resident asked whether key performance indicators such as shop occupancy and footfall are monitored and reported, and whether this information could be made available to help assess the impact and success of the town centre initiatives.

Response: The Council advised that shop occupancy is monitored through an annual survey conducted by Shropshire Council, and the results could be published on the Town Council's website. Footfall data is collected by Visit Shropshire and shared with the Town Council, Chamber, and other organisations, and this information can also be made available.

Question: A resident asked whether the Park and Ride service is the responsibility of Shropshire Council and whether any information is available on its usage, including passenger numbers and car park occupancy.

Response: It was confirmed that the Park and Ride service is managed by Shropshire Council, and therefore the Town Council was unable to comment on its operation or usage figures. Councillor Parry stated that the service was expected to end during the summer.

Question: A resident asked whether local infrastructure and services, including roads, parking, healthcare, schools and utilities, are able to accommodate the increase in population arising from recent housing developments in the Ludford area, and whether the Town Council has plans in place to address any resulting pressures on services and facilities used by Ludlow residents.

Response: It was explained that the housing developments referred to are located within Ludford Parish and therefore fall outside the Town Council's area. Responsibility for strategic infrastructure planning and the provision of services such as highways, education and healthcare rests primarily with Shropshire Council and other relevant authorities. The Town Council acknowledged the concerns raised and stated that it would continue to monitor local issues and engage with the appropriate bodies where necessary.

ATM/09 WRITTEN QUESTIONS RECEIVED IN ADVANCE FROM RESIDENTS

Question 1:

Are all current earmarked reserves fully compliant with the LTC reserve policy?

Answer:

Yes.

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- Earmarked reserves are reviewed annually as part of the budget-setting process and year-end closedown.
- Each reserve is established in line with the council's approved reserves policy, which requires a clear purpose, defined use, and justification linked to known commitments, risk, or planned projects, and are subject to regular review and approval.

Councillor Taylor thanked his wife for the question and noted that he did not share this view and considered that some earmarked reserves lacked sufficient supporting evidence to demonstrate full compliance, although he hoped this would be resolved during the current year.

Question 2:

When will reserved projects be delivered, and what will be completed this financial year?

Answer:

In general:
- priority projects are delivered within the financial year they are approved where feasible
- some projects are phased or carried forward where delivery conditions require

Delivery timescales depend on:
- procurement and contractor availability
- statutory or planning approvals (where required)
- operational capacity and scheduling
- external dependencies and lead-in times

Councillor Taylor commented that further work was needed to clarify delivery timescales and project scopes for some earmarked reserve-funded projects and expressed the hope that this would be addressed over the coming year.

Question 3:

How much was spent from EMRs in the last financial year, and what percentage does this represent?

Answer:

Amount spent: £73,962.60
Percentage of reserves spent is 6%

Question 4:

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How are earmarked reserve figures determined, and what challenges affect forecasting?

Answer:

Earmarked reserves are set through a structured budget process which includes:

- identification of committed or planned capital projects
- asset replacement planning
- known contractual or operational liabilities
- assessed financial risk and contingency requirements

Key challenges in forecasting include:

- inflation and third-party costs
- uncertainty in project timing and phasing
- dependency on external approvals or partners
- supply chain delays and market constraints
- unforeseen maintenance or urgent works

As a result, reserves are regularly reviewed and adjusted to reflect changing circumstances and updated cost information.

Councillor Taylor commented that ongoing work by the Budget Task and Finish Group would help strengthen the documentation and review of reserves going forward.

Members of the public were encouraged to stay for refreshments and an informal discussion with their councillors.

The meeting closed at 8.15PM.

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