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## MINUTES

Minutes of a special meeting of the **COUNCIL** held in the Stable Block Meeting Room, Stone House, Corve Street, Ludlow on **MONDAY 25<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2012** at **7.00PM**.

### FC/58 PRESENT

Chairman: Councillor Pound, Mayor

Vice-Chairman: Councillor Parry, Deputy Mayor

Councillors: Callender; Davies; Draper; Hunt; Newbold; Phillips; Smithers; Toop; Wilcox

Officers: Veronica Calderbank, Town Clerk;  
Lucy Jones, Secretary

### FC/59 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Aitken, Perks and McCormack.

### FC/60 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with the terms of the Local Authorities (Model Code of Conduct) (England) Order 2007 issued under Section 51 of the Local Government Act 2000 Members declared interests as follows:

#### Personal Interests

<u>Member</u>	<u>Item</u>
V. Parry	Ludlow in Bloom
J. Smithers	Ludlow in Bloom
P. Toop	Ludlow in Bloom
P. Hunt	SSHA
	Resident within the area of Weyman Road
L. Callender	Resident within the area of Weyman Road

#### Prejudicial Interests

No prejudicial interests were declared.

**FC/61 PUBLIC OPEN SESSION (15 minutes)**

There were no members of the public and press present.

**FC/62 PUBLIC OPEN SESSION FEEDBACK (15 minutes)**

The Town Clerk stated that all questions had been answered at the previous meeting.

**FC/63 UNITARY COUNCILLORS SESSION**

Unitary Councillor R Taylor-Smith, Ludlow North congratulated the Council on a positive internal audit report and drew Members attention to three typing errors in the report. She also thanked the Town Clerk for the property report which she found very informative.

Councillor Callender joined the meeting at 7.04pm

Councillor R Taylor-Smith added that she was in favour of the Town Council relocating to the Guildhall as it was an appropriate building for the Council.

**FC/64 MINUTES****RESOLVED (unanimous)**

That the approval of the minutes of the Council meeting held on the 28<sup>th</sup> May 2012 be deferred to the next Council meeting.

**FC/65 INTERNAL AUDIT 2011/12**

The Town Clerk explained to Members that due to this meeting being brought forward from Thursday, the Internal Auditor had been short for time to complete the report, hence the spelling mistakes raised by Unitary Councillor Taylor-Smith. She assured the Council that these would be corrected prior to the report being submitted to the External Auditor.

The Town Clerk emphasised to Members that the Internal Auditor was satisfied and had found no problems with the Councils practices. She thanked the Financial Secretary for maintaining the accounts to a high standard. The Mayor agreed and thanked her.

The Town Clerk stated that she had received comments from one Member with regards to their concern over a perceived overspend on the Buttercross and Linney Riverside Park projects. She reassured Members that there was no overspend as extra income had been generated through the projects, some of which had been received in the previous financial year and therefore did not

show on the 2011/12 accounts. She added that she was very proud of the completed Riverside Park.

Councillor Phillips asked if the Council received accounts or receipts in regards to how the community grants issued by the Council were spent. The Town Clerk stated that currently the Council did not receive account from grant recipients but that this would be rectified shortly particularly with regards to the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and Ludlow in Bloom. Councillor Phillips asked if the Town Council were the only donors to Ludlow in Bloom. The Town Clerk advised that there were other donors.

In relation to Ludlow in Bloom the Town Clerk stated that she would be bringing a report to Services Committee shortly in relation to the possibility of the Town Council making purchases on behalf of Ludlow in Bloom in order to make savings by economies of scale.

**FC/66     ANNUAL RETURN**

**RESOLVED (unanimous)**

That the 2011/12 Accounts and Annual Return be approved.

**FC/67     RESOLVED (unanimous)**

That the Internal Audit report be noted and submitted to the External Auditor.

**FC/68     RESOLVED (unanimous)**

That the Annual Return be signed by the Chairman and submitted to the External Auditor.

**FC/69     PROPERTY REPORT**

**a) Registration of Council Properties**

The Town Clerk explained to Members that she was currently in the process of registering Council land with the Land Registry in order to safeguard the title. In relation to the Market Square she stated that she had applied for the freehold title to the subsoil. This registration would not make the Town Council responsible for the adopted highways on this land or affect title to any cellars etc. beneath the square, but it would ensure our ownership of the non highway land and the highway land, should the highway ever be 'closed'. She added that the Cemetery would also be registered shortly.

**RESOLVED (unanimous)**

That the Registration of Council Properties report be noted.

**FC/70 b) Weyman Road**

The Town Clerk explained to Members that she had asked Samuel Wood Estate Agent to value the Weyman Road play area as developable land, but that they were unable to do so.

Councillor Phillips stated that she did not believe the Council should allow building on play areas. She said that Weyman Road is one of the main play areas in the town and the Council had a duty to hold the land in trust for the towns children. She added that much open space had been lost in the town and therefore this area needed to be protected.

Councillor Parry stated that much space had been lost through the actions of one of our own Councillors. Councillor Davies said it was not in the same place.

Councillor Wilcox agreed that the town needed to retain as much green space as possible and to diminish this would be a retrograde step.

Councillor Hunt added that the proposed building would also mean the loss of Shropshire Housing Association open space to create an entrance to the building and this would mean there would be no open space or play areas within the area. He declared an interest.

Councillors Toop, Davies, Callender and Newbold expressed views that the land should not be built upon.

Councillor Parry advised Members that the Elim Church, the proposed purchaser, worked very hard for young people within Ludlow. With around 130 children attending their youth events. She added that the proposed building would not cover the whole site and a play area could be installed. She also stated that the church could provide a vital space for children following the loss of amenity space in the area. Councillor Wilcox asked Members to restrict their decision to the land owned by the Council as all other land was irrelevant to the decision.

**RESOLVED (9:0:2)**

That the Council does not sell the play area at Weyman Road.

**FC/71 c) Boxing Club**

The Town Clerk advised the Council that the new boxing club project would 'break ground' shortly.

**FC/72 d) Guildhall**

The Town Clerk stated that the Council was here to serve the public and that the current office location at the Stable Block had caused issues as it was not in the Town Centre and caused inconvenience to the public. She added that the Stable Block had only ever been intended to be temporary accommodation following the evacuation of the Buttercross. The Buttercross was still unusable as offices as the ceiling were yet to be repaired and there was no disabled access.

The Town Clerk stated that the Guildhall is the most appropriate building available to the Council, it is a very prominent building in the town centre and though it does not currently have disabled access this can be installed easily and due to its location in the town centre is much more accessible the public than the Stable Block. She referred Members to her report.

Colin Richards, Shropshire Council's Head of Historic Environment said to Members that tonight's decision was one of the most important they will make for the people of Ludlow during their term of office. He stated that the Guildhall was a Historic Civic building which had the potential to house the governance of the town at a time when the power of the Town Council is in ascendancy. He added that the building offers the space to house other public bodies offering a combined service to the public.

Colin Richards went on to say that the Court Room/Chamber offered the gravitas of surroundings to fit the decisions made by Council. Also should the Council move to the Guildhall it would open up an historically important building for the public to enjoy again.

Following a question from Councillor Wilcox, the Mayor invited Unitary Councillor R Taylor-Smith to comment. She stated that Shropshire council had not made any decision on the future of the Stone House site. Councillor Wilcox asked that if the site did come up for sale could the Town Council look to purchase the Stable Block building or a section of the main building as he believed the current Guildhall layout may still be cramped. Colin Richards stated that should the Stone House site be sold it was likely to be marketed as a whole, he added that, apart from the Court room, the room partitions were flexible.

Councillor Wilcox stated that he needed more information in order to make such an important decision. He said that marketing the property with only one estate agent which had raised only two expressions of interest and the circulation of one hundred and fifty flyers was not sufficient to make a decision on such an important building.

Councillor Phillips suggested that the whole Stone House site would be out of the Town Council's price range and that we should use the property the Council already owns rather than purchasing more land. She added that the Guildhall was a town asset and Ludlow people deserved the use and enjoyment of such a beautiful building.

Councillor Smithers stated that he had spoken to many of his constituents about this matter, he said that following the loss of the Town Hall the Town Council could not afford to pass over the opportunity to provide the town with another public building as its base. He said that the Guildhall was an iconic building which was almost purpose built for the Council. He added that the Royal British Legion had in storage the World War One and Two memorial plaques which were previously housed in the Town Hall and the Guildhall could offer the appropriate location to make these accessible to the public once again.

Councillor Callender stated that the old Town Hall chambers had been beautiful. The Council's current accommodation and meeting space bore no comparison and the Town Council deserved accommodation appropriate to its status and history.

Councillor Parry said that the Guildhall would make a beautiful location for weddings and other events which could be an extra income stream for the Council. She added that it would be a shame to see the building turned into a commercial property as a restaurant or Theatre when it has always been in civic use.

Councillor Phillips stated the public and the Town Council had been misled over the state of the Town Hall prior to its demolition, but that the Guildhall was a tangible asset to the town and the Council could not pass up such a golden opportunity to provide Ludlow with an appropriate town hall again.

The Town Clerk advised the Council that the Guildhall had been on the internet and advertised for expressions of interest for four months. She stated that she could see no need to reconfigure the internal layout of the Guildhall and that the building offered sufficient space to expand the Council if necessary as the Council takes on new powers and responsibilities.

Councillor Parry stated that she had discussed the possible relocation with the Access Group who were very much in favour of the Town Council returning to the town centre. She added that there were several simple ways to provide disabled access up the front steps of the Guildhall.

Councillor Smithers suggested that taking into account the consultation responses received and the comments he had had from the public, any further consultation would only reinforce that the town is in favour of relocation to the Guildhall.

**FC/73 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC: PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSION TO MEETINGS) ACT 1960**

The Chairman moved that the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item(s) of business pursuant to section 1 of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

**RESOLVED (unanimous)**

That the public be excluded and the meeting continue in closed session.

**FC/76 RESOLVED (8:0:3)**

That:-

- i) the Town Council offices be relocated to the Guildhall as soon as practicable.
- ii) the Town Clerk make regular updates to Council on the progress of the office move.
- iii) extraordinary financial costs be considered by Member of Policy and Finance Committee including the costs of moving.
- iv) a site visit, open to all Members, be arranged.

Colin Richards extended an invitation to all Members to see the works being carried out on the Castle Street Car Park section of Town Wall in order to understand the basis of the Town Walls element of the Heritage Lottery Fund Bid.

**FC/68 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE****Code of Conduct**

**That the new code of conduct be adopted with effect from the 1<sup>st</sup> July 2012 as adopted by the Shropshire Council to be reviewed after a six month period when an approach has been made to the Monitoring officer to provide full details of the Code and definitions in consultation and that the adoption of this code be publicised in the Bulletin and all Notice Boards and Local press.**

The Town Clerk explained to Members that this new Code of Conduct was being adopted by all Parish and Town Councils in Shropshire as well as Shropshire Council in order to simplify the Standards Board investigation process. She added that if the Town Council did not adopt the new Code the Council would lose the support of Shropshire Council's Monitoring Officer.

Following a question from Councillor Wilcox, the Town Clerk stated that though the Standards Board for England was coming to an end, Shropshire Council's Monitoring Officer would still offer support and investigate Code of Conduct matters within the Town Council if the new code was adopted. Councillor Phillips expressed her concern that this move was a step closer to centralised government.

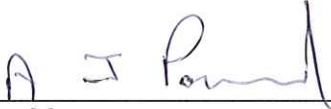
**RESOLVED (10:0:1)**

That

- i) the new Code of Conduct be adopted with effect from the 1<sup>st</sup> July 2012 as adopted by the Shropshire Council to be reviewed after a six month period

- ii) an approach be made to the Monitoring officer to consider all available model codes in consultation with the Parishes.
- iii) the adoption of this code be publicised in the Bulletin and all Notice Boards and Local press.

The meeting closed at 8.25pm.



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Town Mayor

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Date

N.B. Confidential Minutes will be issued.