



MINUTES

Minutes of a meeting of the **POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE** held in the Stable Block Meeting Room, Stone House, Corve Street, Ludlow on **MONDAY 17th JANUARY 2011 at 7.00PM**

PF/119 **PRESENT**

Chairman:	Councillor McCormack
Vice-Chairman:	Councillor Pope
Councillors:	Aitken; Glaze; Newbold; Parry; Pound & Wilcox
In Attendance:	Councillors Hunt; Jackson & Smithers
Officers:	Veronica Calderbank, Town Clerk; Lucy Morgan, PA Gina Wilding, Communications & Cemetery Officer

PF/120 The Chairman welcomed the members of the public and asked if they were present for a specific item. In response she requested that the Allowances for Councillors be moved up the agenda and considered following the approval of the minutes.

RESOLVED (unanimous)

That the order of business be altered to consider the Allowances for Councillors item following the approval of minutes.

PF/121 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Davies.

PF/122 **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		Member of Ludlow in Bloom

Prejudicial Interests

	<u>Member</u>	<u>Item</u>
V. Parry		Member of Ludlow in Bloom

PF/123 PUBLIC OPEN SESSION (15 minutes)

There were eight members of the public present.

Mr Bradley, of Steventon New Road, stated that the Councillor requesting allowances had been elected in September 2010 and he understood had only attended two meetings of the Council since then. He couldn't believe the audacity of this Councillor to demand an allowance from the rate payers of Ludlow and was concerned that private letters had been sent to the Town Clerk when this matter was the concern of all residents. He urged the Committee to disregard this matter and not to give it anymore consideration.

Mr Hollick, of Coles View, Steventon New Road, said that he was disgusted with the whole idea of allowances. He had previously been a Parish Councillor in other areas and he saw the position as an honour and was privileged to represent residents. He added that giving allowances in this financial climate was irresponsible and could easily escalate.

Mr Perks, of Honey Meadow, read from a script attached to these minutes.

Ms Burge, of Coles View, Steventon New Road, informed Members that she lived within the ward of the Councillor who had requested allowances and had not seen her working as a Councillor in the area. Also all Councillors had stood for election on a voluntary basis and therefore knew the situation when elected. She added should the Councillor continue to request allowances they should be asked to resign.

Mr Rickett, of Dinham, explained as a former reporter he had attended many Council meetings, he believed election as a Councillor was an honour in recognition of services to the community, but that there seems to be a growing minority who see election to Councils as a way to make money. He saw the request of £12,000, considering the annual wage in Ludlow is £12,000 to £15,000, unreasonable. The fact that Shropshire Councillors receive £12,000 was not relevant as the responsibilities and workload on a Shropshire Councillor was far greater. He stated that he did not disagree with expenses for travel etc. as Councillors should not lose out monetarily but that allowances could easily escalate.

PF/124 PUBLIC OPEN SESSION FEEDBACK

The Town Clerk stated that Mr Perks' questions from the previous meeting are being pursued and will be reported on at Council.

PF/125 MINUTES**RESOLVED (unanimous)**

That the minutes of the Policy and Finance Committee meeting held on 8th November 2010, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

PF/126 ALLOWANCES FOR COUNCILLORS

The Chairman drew Members attention to the large amount of information the Town Clerk had provided and pointed out that should the Council agree to allowances they would have to consult Shropshire Council's Remuneration Panel and pay their expenses and that any allowances would be an equal amount for all Councillors (not affected by meeting attendance or workload) bar the Mayor. She invited Members to express their views on this item.

The Town Clerk informed the Committee that Councillor Leyton-Purrier had asked her to research other Council's allowances; currently Newtown Town Council paid all Councillors a £500 allowance but that they had a higher precept of £380,000. Bridgnorth Town Council does not pay allowances and Shrewsbury Town Council are currently paying the rates within the report and are seeking a higher sum on application to the Remuneration Panel.

Councillor Smithers stated that he had greatly considered this matter and that as a ten year resident of the town he had considered it an honour when residents had asked him to stand for election. He had never considered asking for an allowance and would not want one. The Town Council had only ever paid an allowance to the Mayor and this was used for the good of the town.

Councillor Wilcox said that he had stood for election to serve the community as he was able and wanted to and that when he was unable to serve the residents of Ludlow, for whatever reason he would withdraw. He asked to retain the status quo.

Councillor Parry commented that she was not concerned about the money she only wished to serve the residents of Ludlow. Even when she had been a District and County Councillor, for which allowances were provided, this had not been an issue in her mind when standing for election.

Councillor Glaze informed Members that she had been a Ludlow Town Councillor for 14/15 years continuously and did not wish to receive an allowance.

Councillor Pound stated that all Councillors were aware upon their election that it was not a paid position. He added that he had become a Councillor to share his skills for the benefit of the town and that he had learnt much during his term of office especially speaking up for the rate payer.

RECOMMENDED (unanimous)

That the Town Council does not seek to pay Parish basic allowances to Members and that the status quo remains.

The Chairman thanked the public for their views and invited them to stay for the rest of the meeting.

Councillor Smithers left the meeting at 7.30pm

PF/127 ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

RESOLVED (unanimous)

That the minutes of the Accounts Committee meetings held on the 3rd November 2010, 2nd December 2010, 14th December 2010 and 5th January 2011, be received.

PF/128 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM SERVICES COMMITTEE

LUDLOW IN BLOOM – REQUEST FOR FUNDING

That the grant of £2,500 be awarded to Ludlow in Bloom for 2011/2012.

Councillor Parry left the meeting at 7.40pm

RECOMMENDED (5:0:2)

That a grant of £2,500 be awarded to Ludlow in Bloom for 2011/2012.

Councillor Parry re-entered the meeting at 7.43pm

PF/129 CEMETERY ISSUES

That:-

- i) grave spaces are to be marked out;**
- ii) an audit should be carried out to establish if graves have been filled without paperwork being provided; and**
- iii) an evaluation of how much space is available for bodies to be interred in the future.**

Councillor Parry introduced this recommendation and added that Services Committee had discussed the matter in detail. Members considered the recommendations.

RECOMMENDED (unanimous)

That:-

- i) grave spaces are to be marked out;
- ii) an audit should be carried out to establish if graves have been filled without paperwork being provided; and
- iii) an evaluation be carried out of how much space is available for future interment.

PF/130 MARKET BOOKING REFUND POLICY

That the Town Clerk be authorised to refund fees where markets are over subscribed or cancelled by the Town Council.

Councillor Parry informed the Committee that the Town Clerk had explained the legal requirements with regard to refunds and Service Committee had made recommendations in light of this.

RECOMMENDED (7:0:1)

That the Town Clerk be authorised to refund fees where markets are over subscribed or cancelled by the Town Council.

PF/131 COUNCIL PROPERTIES

That:-

- i) **The Buttercross is to be included in the Heritage Lottery bid and brought back into public use, civic use with a strong educational element; and**
- ii) **HMCS is to be written to, to establish whether they are vacating the Guildhall; and**
- iii) **Three quotes to replace the pointing on Cemetery House with lime mortar be sought and the central heating to be repaired before it is let to tenants.**
- iv) **The Cemetery House gardens be excluded from the tenancy and be used for propagation and lining out bedding plants.**

Members considered the position and Councillor Parry informed the Committee that due to commercial sensitivity part of this item had been discussed in closed but that the recommendation was open.

PF/132 i) The Buttercross

Councillor Wilcox asked what was meant by public use of the Buttercross, the Town Clerk explained that the Services Committee had received a matrix table of possible public uses as suggested over recent months. She showed the matrix of all uses considered including offices/shop/architects/wine bar and public educational interpretation and heritage centre.

Councillor Pope stated that currently the Town Council had no official welcoming area/room for visiting Mayors and other dignitaries or a robbing room, should the Buttercross have this capability it would be a great asset to the town.

The Town Clerk informed Members that she was in communication with English Heritage with regard to possible future uses of the Buttercross but that it cannot be brought back into public use without being DDA compliant, i.e. installing a lift. Councillor Pound and Parry both expressed their support for making the Buttercross fully accessible to all Members of the public.

RESOLVED (unanimous)

That a full report on the Buttercross be presented to Council relating to possible funding available for the Buttercross to be used as an educational interpretation and heritage centre

PF/133 ii) The Guildhall**RECOMMENDED (unanimous)**

That the Town Clerk write to HMCS to establish whether they will be vacating the Guildhall and when.

PF/134 iii) Cemetery House

Councillor Pope asked if there would be budgetary implications to replacing the mortar on cemetery house, the Town Clerk explained that she was in the process of obtaining quotes for the work and it was hoped that this cost could be covered by the Cemetery House Maintenance budget and would provide for it within the budget for 2011/12.

RECOMMENDED (unanimous)

That three quotes for replacement of the pointing on Cemetery House with lime mortar be sought and the central heating system to be repaired before it is let to tenants.

PF/135 iv) Cemetery House Garden

Councillor Pound queried the exclusion of the garden as it could restrict future letting. The Town Clerk reassured the Committee that the property would still have a garden; only a portion would be removed from any future leases. Councillor Hunt added that when the property was owned by South Shropshire District Council two thirds of the garden was retained by the Council for their use. It was agreed to alter the recommendation to stipulate a portion of the garden would be excluded from the tenancy to be retained for Council use.

RECOMMENDED (unanimous)

That a portion of the Cemetery House gardens be excluded from the tenancy and be retained by the Council for the propagation and lining out bedding plants.

PF/136 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM REPRESENTATIONAL COMMITTEE**CITIZEN ADVICE BUREAUX FUNDING REQUEST**

To recommend to Policy and Finance Committee that, if sufficient funds are available within the budget, CAB should receive a grant of £2,000.00.

Councillor Wilcox commented that due to the current financial climate supporting the Citizens Advice Bureau ("CAB") was even more important. The Town Clerk advised that their request was for £3,000 if possible.

RECOMMENDED (unanimous)

That CAB should be awarded a grant of £2,000.00.

PF/137 MILL WHEEL AT THE BUTTERCROSS

To support the proposal from Dinham Millennium Green Trust and recommendation to Policy & Finance Committee that the Mill Wheel at the Buttercross would be more suitably displayed within the Mill on the Green's 'Viewing Room', which would be a much more relevant position for a Mill Wheel.

Councillor Wilcox stated that he thought that the Millennium Green would be a more appropriate position for the mill wheel as there had been a mill there and there had never been a mill at the Buttercross.

Councillor Parry commented that she thought it would be a shame to relocate the mill wheel as it was a focal point within the Buttercross that had been there for hundreds of years. Councillor Newbold added that this matter had been discussed several times in the past and that the Council had always voted for it to stay in the Buttercross.

Councillor Pound stated that the mill wheel's current position was a tried and tested safe place and allowed it to be on display twenty-four hours a day.

RESOLVED (3:5:0)

To support the proposal from Dinham Millennium Green Trust and recommendation to Policy & Finance Committee that the Mill Wheel at the Buttercross would be more suitably displayed within the Mill on the Green's 'Viewing Room', which would be a much more relevant position for a Mill Wheel.

PF/138 The proposition not being carried it was proposed that the matter be referred to full Council.

RECOMMENDED (unanimous)

That Council considers the request from Dinham Millennium Green to move the Mill Wheel from the Buttercross to the Green's 'Viewing Room'.

PF/139 STAFFING AND APPEALS SUB-COMMITTEE

a) Minutes

RESOLVED (unanimous)

That the minutes of the Staffing and Appeals Sub-Committee meeting held on the 13th December 2010, be received.

b) Recommendations

Members noted that the recommendations would be considered at the next Policy and Finance Committee.

PF/140 TOWN PLAN WORKING GROUP

The Chairman informed the Committee that the notes and agenda were only for information, that the Working Group were continuing their work and that the meeting on the 13th January 2011 was to allow discussion between all Councillors. Councillor Pope said that she felt such a meeting went against the Working Group's terms of reference and that the Council's priorities/policies should only be set by Council.

PF/141 REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

The Chairman invited Councillors to report to the Committee on any updates from outside bodies. The Mayor informed Members that the next Local Joint Committee would be held on the 22nd February 2011 at 7.00pm in Ashford Carbonell Village Hall, and all were welcome.

Councillor Parry stated that she had attended an ALC meeting at which it had been discussed that Shropshire Council was likely to be delegating more services to Town and Parish Councils and that as the Council's workload increases they may wish to reconsider Councillor's allowances. Councillor Wilcox queried whether any funding had been mentioned. Councillor Parry stated that no funding was mentioned and that there may be difficult times ahead.

Councillor Jackson passed to the Town Clerk reports from the Trustees of Whitcliffe Common, South Shropshire Refuge Partnership Group, Working Together and South Shropshire Young Partnership, and requested that any Members wishing to view these reports contact the Town Clerk. The Chairman thanked Members for their reports.

Councillor Jackson left the meeting at 8.10pm

PF/142 MEMORIAL BENCHES

The Town Clerk explained to the Committee that the Cemetery and Communications Officer had put a lot of work into this report and that a decision was needed so that the information could be passed on to the public. The Chairman explained that there were two issues to consider, the policy and the type of bench to be used.

The Committee considered the policy and stated that Bench Regulation 1. needed to stipulate that the benches were to be paid for by the individual, not the Town Council. Councillor Parry informed Members that she understood other areas had experienced vandalism/theft problems with brass plaques and it was agreed to change the Regulations throughout to stipulate metal plaques and not 'brass'.

RECOMMENDED (unanimous)

That following the amendments above the Memorial Bench Regulations be adopted.

Councillor Hunt left the meeting at 8.20pm

PF/143 The Cemetery and Communications Officer introduced the different types of benches available. The Town Clerk stated that the benches needed to be fit for

purpose, not a domestic bench. The Mayor commented that there was currently a wide variety of benches across Ludlow and that so long as the bench fitted in with the benches in situ in the surrounding area the public could have a choice.

Councillor Wilcox pointed out that due to the price difference for benches allowing different benches for each area could put pressure on the public, therefore he believed one bench throughout was preferable. Councillor Pope added that benches with arms prevented them being used by skateboarders.

RECOMMENDED (5:2:1)

That the 'Lakeside' bench be the only type of bench used.

PF/144 ACCOUNTS – 3rd QUARTER

The Chairman referred the Members to the exceptions report and asked if they had any queries not explained within that report. No queries were raised.

Councillor Parry stated that she thought the report was clear, precise and easily understood. The Mayor added that it was a good set of accounts and the Council looked well set for the remainder of the year.

The Chairman thanked staff for their hard work and allowing Councillors to have such confidence in the accounts.

RESOLVED (unanimous)

That the 3rd Quarter Accounts report be noted.

PF/145 PUBLIC CONVENIENCES

The Town Clerk explained that she had been approached by Shropshire Council to consider taking over the public toilets within Ludlow and that there was a possibility of exchanging some of the Town Council's streetlights in return for the toilets, proportional to the cost of toilet maintenance. Councillor Wilcox stated that if Shropshire Council were to take streetlights they should take them all. The Town Clerk explained that Shropshire Council were trying to lower costs and therefore would be unlikely to take all streetlights.

Councillor Aitken added that it did not make sense to only transfer part of the streetlight stock and perhaps Shropshire Council could delegate further duties to the Town Council in return for adopting all streetlights.

Councillor Pope commented on the pressure Shropshire Council were putting the Town Council under to take over toilets as there was little justification for there to be no toilets within Ludlow. The Chairman added that the Town Plan consultations had pointed out that toilet provision was a high priority to residents and that they wished to see more toilets in Ludlow. She believed that Shropshire

Council were being short sighted and that this issue could greatly affect tourism and goes against Shropshire Council's policies and Charter as Town and Parish Councils were not fully consulted merely informed that it was going to happen.

Councillor Pound pointed out that there were toilets available to the public in Tesco and Aldi. Councillor Pope advised that these were not public toilets and therefore the supermarkets policy of opening toilets to the public could change at any time and that they were not central to the town.

Councillor Aitken raised the issue of charging for toilet use to cover expenses, the Chairman stated that when she was a Member of the District Council this have been fully investigated but it attracted greater vandalism and was insufficient to cover costs.

RESOLVED (unanimous)

That the Town Clerk be given the power to continue negotiations with Shropshire Council with regard to toilets and streetlights, to obtain the best deal for the Town Council and report back to Council.

PF/146 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.

The meeting closed at 9.20pm.

Chairman

Date

N.B. Confidential Minutes will be issued.