



MINUTES

Minutes of a meeting of the **POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE** held in the Stable Block Meeting Room, Stone House, Corve Street, Ludlow on **TUESDAY 20th APRIL 2010** at **7.00PM**

PF43/10 PRESENT

Chairman: Councillor Taylor-Smith

Vice Chairman: Councillor Pope

Councillors: Aitken; Davies; McCormack; Newbold; Pound; Wilcox

Officers: Veronica Calderbank, Town Clerk;
Lucy Morgan, PA

In Attendance: Councillor V. Parry, Ludlow Town Council;
Councillor R. Taylor-Smith, Shropshire Council

PF44/10 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor M. Glaze.

PF45/10 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>
Cllr Pope	Ludlow Town Band
Cllr Taylor-Smith	Unitary Councillor

Prejudicial Interests

No prejudicial interests were declared.

PF46/10 PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

There was one member of the public present.

Councillor R. Taylor-Smith, Unitary Councillor, introduced herself to the Committee and informed Members a Shropshire Council Site Allocation Document meeting on 21st April 2010 at the Harley Centre, 4.30-7.00pm. Also that the next Local Joint Committee would be held on 25th May at the Food Centre, Bromfield.

In response to this the Mayor added that it would be important for Ludlow Town Council to have a meeting regarding the Site Allocation Document, as it set out Shropshire Council's aims the future of the Town until 2026 and that this would need to be taken into account with the Town Plan.

PF47/10 MINUTES

RESOLVED (unanimous)

That the minutes of the Policy & Finance Committee meeting held on 1st March 2010, subject to the insertion of the words "should be distributed with the Buttercross Bulletin" in minute PF34/10, be approved as a correct record.

PF48/10 ACCOUNTS SUB-COMMITTEE

RESOLVED (unanimous)

That the minutes of the Accounts Sub-Committee meetings held on 17th March 2010 and 25th March 2010, be received.

PF49/10 CIVIC EVENTS WORKING GROUP

The Town Clerk explained to Members that three meetings of the Civic Events Working Group had taken place and the draft protocols would be presented to the next Policy and Finance Committee.

PF50/10 ADOPTION OF MODEL STANDING ORDERS

The Mayor introduced this item and drew Members attention to Standing Order 31, Allegations of Breaches of the Code of Conduct. Members stated that they thought it would be unwise to have Ludlow Town Council Members sitting in judgement of their fellow Councillors on Code of Conduct matters.

The Mayor agreed and stated that such matters were better dealt with by an outside impartial body, detached from the issue. Councillor Davies disagreed as he felt that an external body would not understand the details and quirks of Ludlow Town Council.

Councillor Pope asked what disciplinary measures there were internally for Councillors. The Town Clerk advised that any matters could be put to full Council, who had the power to remove Councillors from Committees.

Councillor Pope further stated that as the Council did not have a “Whistle Blowing Policy” she would not feel comfortable with Councillors judging Councillor complaints internally. In reply the Mayor stated that the Charter for Local Councils which was to be discussed later in the meeting contained a “Whistle Blowing Policy”. He added that the Standing Orders dictated conduct at meeting and the Code of Conduct regulated behaviour outside of meeting but that having an informal conciliation process through the Town Clerk would be beneficial.

Councillor Wilcox agreed that the wording of this section was not suitable to a Town/Parish Council.

The Town Clerk informed Members that in the last year there had been no Councillor against Councillor complaints and that she understood that the public and press were impressed by this improvement which had raised the Council’s profile.

RECOMMENDED (8:1:0)

That complaints against Councillors be referred to the Town Clerk in order for them to conciliate where possible. If the Town Clerk is unable to affect a resolution the complainant is to be referred to the Shropshire Council Monitoring Officer/Standards Committee.

The Town Clerk drew Members attention to the Standing Order referring to indemnity for legal costs and she recommended that a tight limit is needed to avoid escalating legal costs if this was chosen.

The Mayor stated that Shropshire Council did not provide indemnity for legal costs to Councillors and that providing cover may encourage Councillors not to abide to the Code of Conduct. Councillor Aitken added that providing cover could be counter productive, but he did not wish to see Councillors vulnerable to false allegations.

The Town Clerk stated that this Standing Order only referred to automatic cover and that Council could consider cover on a case by case basis if they felt that indemnity for legal costs was justified.

PF51/10 RECOMMENDED (unanimous)

That Ludlow Town Council does not provide automatic indemnity for legal costs.

In response to a question as to whether a member of staff should report Members to the Monitoring Officer, the Mayor stated that staff were employed and thus covered by the Grievance Policy/Staffing and Appeals Committee, Councillors are not employed therefore their only complaint route is through the Code of Conduct complaint procedure.

Councillor Wilcox queried whether a matter of gross misconduct by a Councillor towards a member of staff should be reported to the Monitoring Officer. In reply the Town Clerk stated that Council could instruct her to refer the matter to the Monitoring Officer.

The Town Clerk advised Members on the Standing Order relating to attendance at meetings. She stated if a Member did not give a valid reason for not attending any meetings in six months they would be automatically disqualified from serving on the Council. She added that there was no requirement to give a reason for absence within six months but the reason must be approved in that time to avoid disqualification.

Councillor McCormack queried whether the Standing Orders stipulate the number of Committees each Member can be on, as she believed there was a need to encourage equality of membership. Councillor Davies commented that as many Members worked, attending meetings in the morning or afternoon could be difficult. Councillor Aitken added that there was a need for all wards to be represented on Committees. In response to these comments the Mayor stated that Members needed to consider their skills and availability when nominating themselves for Committee membership.

PF52/10 RECOMMENDED (unanimous)

That the Standing Orders, as amended, be adopted.

PF53/10 REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

a) Local Joint Committee

Councillor Aitken reiterated Unitary Councillor R Taylor-Smith's statement on the date of the next Local Joint Committee.

b) Six Market Towns

Councillor Smithers was not present.

c) **Cittaslow**

Councillor Davies stated that he had missed the last meeting but that he had a document regarding the proposed substitute for Cittaslow. The Mayor suggested that Councillor Davies present a brief on this to the next Policy and Finance Committee.

PF54/10 LUDLOW CHAMBER OF TRADE AND COMMERCE

Councillor Pope explained to Members that the invoice had gone to Accounts Sub-Committee and that they had queried the amount and asked for further information. Having seen the proofs provided with the Agenda she was happy for this to be paid.

RESOLVED (unanimous)

That the invoice be paid and the cheque be signed by Members of the Accounts Sub-Committee.

PF55/10 DRAFT CHARTER FOR LOCAL COUNCILS

The Mayor introduced the Charter for Local Councils to the Committee, he explained that the Charter laid out Shropshire Council's commitments to us and our commitments to Shropshire Council. It detailed the sharing of powers and work, and access to advice. Councillor Parry commented that she thought the direct department telephone numbers for Shropshire Council would be very useful as many had changed since the move to Unitary. The Mayor added that communication needed to be two way and that Shropshire Council would provide any documents/further information Councillors requested where possible.

RECOMMENDED (8:0:1)

That the Charter for Local Councils as amended be adopted as a way forward for joint working with Shropshire Council.

PF56/10 SHOP RADIO SCHEME

The Town Clerk introduced the OFTEL account for £100.00 to Members and added that currently she was only aware of one shop using the scheme. Following inquiries by PC Dan Wood he had found a number of shops now interested in the scheme.

The Mayor stated that Shropshire Council had a crime prevention scheme and that they were in a better position to support the Shop Radio Scheme than the Town Council. Councillor McCormack added that she wanted to be sure that if the Town Council opted out of the scheme it would not collapse.

Councillor Aitken informed the Committee that shops across Ludlow had signed up to work together and that the Radio Scheme was not fundamental to this cooperation, in fact many shops did not want a radio.

RECOMMENDATION (unanimous)

That the Town Council opt out of financially supporting the Shop Radio Scheme.

PF57/10 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC: PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSION TO MEETINGS) ACT 1960

RESOLVED (unanimous)

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.

The meeting closed at 8.15pm.

Chairman

Date

N.B. Confidential Minutes will be issued.