



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 28th FEBRUARY 2011** at **7.00PM**

PF/155 **PRESENT**

Chairman: Councillor McCormack
 Vice-Chairman: Councillor Pope
 Councillors: Aitken; Newbold; Parry; & Wilcox
 Officers: Veronica Calderbank, Town Clerk;
 Lucy Morgan, PA

PF/156 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Glaze and Pound.

PF/157 **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>
A. Pope		Parking

Prejudicial Interests

No Prejudicial Interests were declared.

PF/158 **PUBLIC OPEN SESSION (15 minutes)**

There were four members of the public present.

Alison Adams, of Cedar Blue Apex, Ludlow stated that her business uses a Galdeford Car Park season ticket, as carrying cash on the park and ride bus was not secure, the considerable increase in price would be very difficult for her.

Unitary Councillor R. Taylor-Smith stated that the parking consultation letter had been sent in order to comply with the law and that the order had already been adopted. She said that the season ticket prices were based on two hundred day occupancy of the relevant car park and a 3% increase to all charges.

She went on to thank the Town Council and public for their help and co-operation during the works to Ludford Bridge and King Street. She also drew the Committees attention to a forthcoming Shropshire Council Project called the Queen Elizabeth II Field Challenge for which some of the Town's play areas may qualify.

Councillor Parry raised the issue of incorrect signage for road closures. The Town Clerk stated that this had been raised with Shropshire Council Officers.

PF/159 ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chairman requested a change to the order of business to allow Silvia Duffy to speak on Fair-trade prior to the consideration of minutes as she needed to leave shortly.

RESOLVED (unanimous)

That the order of business be altered to allow Silvia Duffy to speak prior to the consideration of the minutes.

PF/160 Councillor Pope asked why Fair-trade was being considered as it was not on the agenda. The Town Clerk suggested that the public open session be reopened to allow Silvia Duffy to address the Committee.

RESOLVED (6:1:0)

That the Public Open Session be re-opened.

PF/161 PUBLIC OPEN SESSION (15 minutes)

Silvia Duffy made a presentation to the Committee on Fair-trade Ludlow and distributed some Fair-trade literature.

PF/162 PUBLIC OPEN SESSION FEEDBACK

All questions posed at the previous meeting had been answered during the meeting.

PF/163 MINUTES

RESOLVED (unanimous)

That the minutes of the Policy and Finance Committee meeting held on 17th January 2011, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

PF/164 ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

RESOLVED (unanimous)

That the minutes of the Accounts Committee meetings held on the 26th January and 16th February 2011, be received.

PF/165 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM SERVICES COMMITTEE

There were no open recommendations from Services Committee.

PF/166 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM STAFFING AND APPEALS SUB-COMMITTEE

Grievance and Disciplinary Policy

That the Town Clerk arrange for the changes highlighted in red to be made and taken as a draft to Policy and Finance Committee on the 17th January 2011 for consideration, with a recommendation for approval.

The Town Clerk stated that the policy was based on the NALC model. The Mayor added that the current Policy had its shortcomings and importantly the new policy defined the difference between the informal and formal procedure.

Councillor Parry thanked the Mayor and Town Clerk for putting together a policy that is so easy to follow. Councillor Newbold asked if this policy would replace the current one. The Town Clerk stated that once adopted by Council it would replace the old policy.

Councillor Wilcox highlighted the training requirement within the policy; the Town Clerk stated that this would be arranged in the coming months.

RECOMMENDED (unanimous)

That Grievance and Disciplinary Policy be adopted.

PF/167 Managing Absence

That the draft policy be recommended to Policy and Finance Committee on the 17th January 2011 for approval.

The Mayor informed the Committee the issue of long term sickness absence had recently arisen and that there had been a lack of clarity in the old policy. This new policy made the rules clear to staff and Members. Councillor Pope expressed her concerns as to the budget implications of substitute staffing to cover long term absence. The Chairman stated that the Town Council had a legal obligation to continue paying staff on sick leave. The Town Clerk added that the policy ensured that any issues could be addressed in the short term and hopefully minimise the financial pressures on the Council.

RECOMMENDED (unanimous)

That Managing Absence Policy be adopted.

PF/168 STREET TRADING LICENSING

The Town Clerk explained to the Committee that in January 2010 Council had agreed to take over Street Trading Powers from Shropshire Council under Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972. The letter attached to the agenda confirmed the delegation of powers from the 1st April 2011. The Council therefore needs to agree a policy on how to manage these powers. She stated that an example of Shropshire Council's policy would be presented to the next Council. Councillor Wilcox asked if the Council was constrained to using Shropshire Council's policy. The Town Clerk stated that she was only using Shropshire Council's policy as a basis and that Members could vary it however they wished to incorporate the local needs/issues in Ludlow. She added that we were the first Town Council in the Country to take over these powers.

The Chairman drew Members attention to paragraph three of the letter which stated "Town Council are now able to administer the function in addition to Shropshire Council" she asked the Town Clerk to clarify this statement as she was concerned there may be issues if the Town Council and Shropshire Council were both implementing these powers.

RESOLVED (unanimous)

That:-

- i. the letter from Shropshire Council be noted.
- ii. the Town Clerk seek clarification from Shropshire Council with regard to paragraph three of the their letter.

PF/169 REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

The Mayor updated the Committee on the events at the last Local Joint Committee meeting and stated that the brief minutes would be distributed to all Councillors.

PF/170 PARKING

The Town Clerk informed the Committee that Council had previously considered the matter of subsidising car park charges and had requested information on the charges imposed on other car parks across the county. Though she had sought this information none had been received. She explained that statutorily Shropshire Council had to consult before setting the Order but that they had already confirmed their budget to include the new charges.

Councillor Pope highlighted that the draft Order on the Shropshire Council website differed from what was being adopted and the lack of consultation on the prices of season tickets, which were to be increased by over 80%. She added that such a large increase discriminates against workers who live outside of Ludlow who are unable to use the Park and Ride due to its operating hours.

The Town Clerk stated that many of the issues were a matter of process but that reconciling these issues would not help this year.

Councillor Parry said that Shropshire Council did not seem to consider the Town Council's comments; Ludlow is a low paid area and many people would not be able to afford the price increases which for Galdeford Car Park Zone A was over 100%. This could therefore lead to a loss of workers.

Councillor Wilcox asked that as Shropshire Council and Oswestry Town Council both own car parks in Oswestry were charges being kept in line? The Mayor asked if comments made by the Council would be in time to be taken into account. The Town Clerk stated that the next Council would be too late but that any recommendations made tonight would be looked at.

RECOMMENDED (unanimous)

That:-

- i. the Town Council objects to the increase in the price of season tickets which should be kept to a maximum of 3% increase to cover inflation.
- ii. the Town Clerk query the difference between the published draft order and the order being adopted.

The Mayor commented that Shropshire Council had stated the increase was to regularise car park charges across the county but that without figures for other car parks the Town Council could not consider the matter in context. He added that if the season ticket prices were based on 200 days occupancy, discounting weekends and holidays the ticket did not offer a significant discount.

PF/171 RESOLVED (unanimous)

That the Town Clerk write to Shropshire Council to express the Town Council's concerns regarding the lack of meaningful consultation and provision of relevant information, therefore breaching the terms of the Shropshire Council Charter.

PF/172 PUBLIC CONVENIENCES

The Town Clerk explained to Members the issues she was facing with regard to this matter, she stated that she had met with Steve Brown regarding toilets and Ron Buzzacott regarding streetlights but that the two departments had not met in order to negotiate an exchange. She went on to say that the repairs and installation of coin box etc. that were to be completed by Shropshire Council prior to any transfer have not been done, but this could be solved if the monies were transferred with the toilets and as such she was making enquiries with regard to coin boxes and automatic closing systems.

The Town Clerk reiterated that she was aiming for a cost neutral transfer but that TUPE regulations had now become an issue and Shropshire Council had informed her that the Town Council might have to take into account TUPE. She clarified that in order for TUPE to apply the majority of the employees time had to be spent on Ludlow toilets which it was not and this was unlikely. She added that any further report would be in closed session.

The Town Clerk added that she had contacted Unitary Councillor M. Taylor-Smith who has requested from Shropshire Council figures regarding this matter; none have been received in time for the meeting.

The Chairman stated that she had attended the meeting with Steve Brown who had promised answers to specific questions for tonight but they had not been received.

The Chairman said that as the deadline approached the Town Council needed to make it clear to the public that the closures were due to Shropshire Council, as toilets were an important issue in Ludlow and Town Plan consultations had highlighted that the public wished to have more public conveniences.

The Town Clerk said that due the issues encountered she had requested to speak to Senior Management and had today been contacted by Chris Edwards whose remit covered both toilets and streetlights and that meeting looked promising.

Councillor Pope commented that other Council's seemed to have been treated differently and have already agreed exchanges or lump sums in return for toilets.

RECOMMENDED (unanimous)

That:-

- i. in light of the ongoing discussions the Town Council request a delay of the closure of Ludlow's toilets until a resolution is agreed.
- ii. if the closure is not delayed the Town Council publicise the situation.

The Mayor stated that he believed a part exchange of streetlights was impractical and that a bargain could be sought with Shropshire Council to

delegate other works to the Town Council for the remaining value of taking over all streetlights.

Councillor Wilcox left the meeting at 8.20pm

PF/173 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.

Councillor Wilcox rejoined the meeting at 8.24pm

PF/176 STREETLIGHTING

The Town Clerk explained that the Town Council currently paid 13p a unit for streetlight electricity and that Shropshire Council was able to purchase this on the Town Councils behalf at 9p a unit.

RECOMMENDED (unanimous)

That the Town Council accept Shropshire Council's offer to purchase streetlight electricity on the Town Council's behalf, if Shropshire Council do not take over all of the Town Council's streetlights.

PF/177 PRODUCTION OF MINUTES

Councillor Parry stated that she had been approached by a member of the public who believed that simple/short minutes containing only the resolutions were better than the current longer minutes and that more information was provided to cover up what the Council doesn't want the public to know. She added that she believed without background knowledge the shorter form of minutes as used in 2007/08 were difficult to understand.

Councillor Wilcox said that in terms of transparency the current longer minutes were better. The Chairman commented that there was a difference between information and verbiage and that shorter minutes would save printing costs and staff time. The Town Clerk asked how it should be decided what was included and what was not?

Councillor Davies stated that he thought it was important to see who said what on each side of a debate and that detail would give people in the future a better understanding when they refer back to the minutes. Councillor Pope said that including detail shows the public that matters are debated, Councillor Parry agreed with this comment and added that the current minutes illustrate that the Council is open and fair.

The Mayor commented that more detailed minutes allowed Members not present to understand what happened and the reasoning behind decisions.

RESOLVED (6:1:0)

That minutes continue to be presented in the same format and length.

PF/178 RETENTION AND DESTRUCTION POLICY

The Town Clerk requested that this item be deferred to the next meeting to allow her to consider the matter further.

RESOLVED (unanimous)

That the Retention and Destruction Policy be deferred to the next Policy and Finance Committee.

PF/179 SHROPSHIRE COUNTY PENSION FUND VALUATION

The Town Clerk informed the Committee that this change to pension contributions was not voluntary and asked two signatories to sign the form.

The Chairman queried if this would affect the budget. The Town Clerk stated that this alteration to the pension fund contribution was not in the budget but that the Council did have a contingency fund for 2011/12.

RESOLVED (unanimous)

That:-

- i. the Actuarial Valuation form be signed by two signatories of the Council.
- ii. the town Clerk write a letter to the Pension Fund requesting that any alterations be notified earlier in the year if possible prior to the budget setting process.
- iii. the £4100 be paid from the contingencies fund.

PF/180 UNNECESSARY DUPLICATION OF REPORTS

The Town Clerk asked Members to consider bringing previous Committee reports to future meetings when the matter is to be reconsidered or recommendations have been made. This would save a large amount of paper,

printing costs, postage and staff time. The Mayor asked that the Council also consider providing agendas electronically.

RECOMMENDATION (unanimous)

That:-

- i. where reports which have already been presented to a meeting are to be reconsidered unaltered, Council request Members to bring the previous agenda papers rather than duplicating the report.
- ii. the Town Council consider receiving agendas electronically.

PF/181 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 9.00pm.

Chairman

Date

N.B. Confidential Minutes will be issued.