**Minutes of a Virtual Annual Town Meeting held on Thursday 29 April 2021 at 7.00pm.**

**Present:** Councillors: R. Aldcroft (Mayor), Mrs. J. Beckett, T. Beckett, A Cartwright,

M. Erwin, S. Glover, J. Gough, I. Nellins and M. Whittle.

**Clerk:** Town Clerk and Assistant Clerk.

There were also 11 members of the public in attendance.

1. **Welcome by the Town Mayor**

Councillor Aldcroft introduced himself and welcomed everyone to the virtual Annual Town meeting. He said members will be able to listen to the meeting following the link on the agenda.

He passed over to the Clerk to report due to being in purdah.

The Clerk said due to the meeting being held virtually this year members of the public can not see which councillors are present. A role call is not on the agenda but it will let residents know who is in the meeting.

The Clerk reported the following Councillors present: Councillors; R. Aldcroft, A. Cartwright, M. Erwin, S. Glover, I. Nellins and M. Whittle.

She wanted members of the public listening to know that this not a Council meeting; it is a meeting for the electors of the town. The Town Council is legally bound to facilitate an annual meeting of electors between the months of March, April, and May. This year the meeting is being held virtually due to the Covid19 restrictions, however the Town Hall telephone line will be open for the duration of the meeting; if any residents would like to ask a question, the telephone number is 653364 you will need to give your name, address and telephone number and she will call you back where any issues, comments or questions can be raised.

1. **To hear a report on the Council’s aims and accomplishments over the 4 year Council term.**

The report was up on the screen for residents to see.

The Clerk read out the key parts of the report.

The Report was as follows:

**Market Drayton Town Achievements this last four-year term**

This council, it’s administration, it’s external staff and all twelve councillors have been involved in the following items during the last four-year term of the council.

• Assisting Shropshire Council, Foodbank & Medical Centre during the Covid Crisis. Signposting folk to medical/social services.

• Work with Owen Paterson and Public Health Director re Vaccinations

• Drayton in Bloom competition each year

• Town Floral Displays

• VJ celebrations, VE commemorations, Remembrance Parade

• Toilets Skate Park been totally refurbed, Covid and Vandal Proofed.

• Town Toilets Covid proofed and extra cleaning during Covid.

• Toilets at Town Hall refurbed following arson attack. Covid Proofed

• Funding Greenfields sports Assn including Tigers £27.5K per annum

• Fitting LED lighting on town owned street lighting. Particular attention to Grosvenor Rd.

• Increased Type and quantity of Christmas lights.

• Provision of Covid Commemorative Covid Plinth at Library

• Financial and Administrative Assistance to fledging chamber of commerce.

• Funding Youth Club Provision Rooms and Staffing; £1,600 + £17.5K

• Regular Meetings of Chairmen of Committees for strategic planning

• Regular Meetings with Inspector Claire Greenaway and Police Officers covering County Lines, Drugs etc

• Refurbishment and installation of fencing on playpark at Cherry Way

• Major refurbishment plans for Dalelands Park

• Continuing Maintenance of council assets and play equipment.

• Maintenance of four vehicles and trailers.

• Provision of defibrillators at Town Hall and Bus Station.

• Developing Website, Messenger, and virtual meetings.

• With joint funding from the Police Commissioner, replaced and expanded the CCTV system throughout the town to include number plate recognition cameras. All car parks now have cameras. Police extensively use the images produced the quality is excellent by day or night.

• High Sheriff visit to Businesses and Town. Shropshire/ Cheshire charity cycle ride.

• Visit and Inspection of key Roads and footpaths by Head of Highways.

• Nature Corridors to be developed from Sandy Lane to Longford.

• Active group working at Walkmills Meadows Nature Area.

Councillors are involved in a variety of issues, primarily planning and assisting the public to access services. In addition, they are expected to participate in training sessions and formal meetings to organise the above list which is not exhaustive. This can involve quite a commitment in time on major projects like planning, CCTV or Zone building. Councillors are also governed by a set of protocols which govern how public money can be spent and how meetings are conducted. This also covers the behaviour expected of councillors representing their communities.

The Town Council deals with Parks, Cemeteries, Lighting, Toilets, CCTV and town centre litter.

Most key issues: Planning, potholes, flooding, footpaths, trees, Social Services, housing, rates and a myriad of other issues come under Shropshire Council remit.

There are twelve councillors currently and they attend meetings of the Planning, Services, Finance, and Community committees. Issues are discussed and voted on by all present. Most Councillors can expect to spend 6 hours a month on Town council issues. Chairmen and Mayor in the region of 32 hours in and preparing for meetings or seminars.

The Town Council is more of a team since the last election. The conservatives do hold the majority with eight seats and Independent Councillors three and labour one. Political party whips or point scoring do not apply at Town level as all councillors are expected to vote in the interests of their constituents.

The Clerk reported that there are nine attendees listening to the meeting at this point.

1. **Apologies for absence**

Apologies have been received and accepted from Councillor R. Smith.

Councillor Mrs. J. Beckett and T. Beckett joined the meeting.

1. **To confirm the minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 25 April 2019.**

The minutes were on the screen for residents to see.

The Clerk asked if members were satisfied with the minutes; they are from 2019 due to no meeting being held last year due to the Coronavirus outbreak.

Councillors said they were.

Councillor Glover proposed, Councillor Aldcroft seconded and it was **RESOLVED:**

**To confirm the minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 25 April 2019.**

The Mayor said he has received a message from Councillor Gough; he is trying to join the meeting but is having a few problems.

The Assistant Clerk left the meeting to answer the telephone.

**5. Questions from the electors**

The Clerk said she has had a request from Mr. Roy Payne to speak at the meeting; he would like to report on Market Drayton Community Enterprise. She telephoned Mr Payne so he was able to speak in the meeting.

Mr Payne joined the meeting; he said he would like to withdraw from speaking at the meeting due to it being very political, he is not happy with how the agenda has been written so would prefer to not participate in the meeting.

Mr Payne thanked the Clerk for her help and left the meeting.

The Clerk reported that there are eleven attendees listening to the meeting at this point.

Councillor Gough joined the meeting.

The Assistant Clerk re-joined the meeting after being on the telephone.

The Clerk said Mrs. Janet Smith would like to join the meeting; she telephoned her up so that she could participate.

Mrs Smith thanked the Clerk for calling her back, she had problems with the link to listening to the meeting.

The Clerk said there are eleven members listening in to the meeting so the link is working.

Her questions were:

Q. The last Annual Town minutes were April 2019 is that correct?

A The Clerk said yes this was because no meeting was held last year due to the Coronavirus outbreak.

Q The minutes from the April 2019 meeting says there was a question raised from the Market Drayton Community Enterprise they were asking the Council for help for a pop-up shop; she would like to know what help has been given to them over the last two years in letting them fulfil their adventure.

A The Clerk said she is aware Shropshire Council have offered the group two different locations but they have not been suitable for their needs. The Town Council offer the use of the Chamber to meet up at no charge however due to the pandemic again this has not happened.

Q Mrs Smith asked if any grants have been offered to get the group started?

A The Clerk said the Group have received Small Grants from Town Council in the past but was unsure if Shropshire Council have offered them any financial support.

Councillor Glover said Shropshire Council offered the old Tourist Information office and space at Raven House but neither was suitable. It is an ongoing search to find an appropriate location but there does not seem to be one at the moment. He said a better use of the Chamber could help the group.

Q Mrs Smith said, on the minutes it says the market stalls are out for tendering; she understands that this would have now been completed but asked what the outcome was and has there been any improvements made?

A The Clerk said Shropshire Council have organised the tender process, she is aware it has been awarded to the same business, LSD Promotions but is unaware of any further details.

Councillor Glover wanted to pick up on Mrs Smith first question regarding the Market Drayton Enterprise; he said Council have sat through many meetings to discuss the lowering of the Chamber ceiling, doing this would generate much needed office space above letting the Chamber free to be used. All structural engineers reports and tenders have been completed for the works but unfortunately due to Covid this has not been completed.

The Clerks suggested when the new Council have been elected, they should talk to Market Drayton Community Enterprise to get the dialogue going again.

Mrs Smith said the redesign and work on the Chamber seems very expensive to her especially when there are a lot of suitable venues around the town the group could use.

Mrs Smith thanked the Clerk for all the responses and she stayed on the telephone so that she could carry on listening to the remainder of the meeting.

The Clerk said she has received one written question.

Q Is it true two Conservative County Councillors now Independent Councillors who are on Town Council fail to inform the Town Council that they condone the closure of the outside swimming pool in 2016/17 and despite the area being in their county division failed to start at the dialog regarding the future use of the area with the Town Council. Please could you name them for the record.

A The Clerk said she does not have the answers to these questions and the particular councillors are not at the meeting tonight to answer either. She can confirm that the Council have had no dialog regarding the future use of the area until recently when we were considering a splash pool.

There is no more the Clerk can say about the question; it can only be answered by the specific County Councillors.

There were no more questions asked.

1. **The Town Mayor’s closing remarks**

The Mayor thanked everybody for attending and listening into the virtual meeting; it has been a little different this year but wanted to stress the point there will be another face-to-face meeting after the elections have taken place to give residents an opportunity to discuss any further comments they would like to make to the new Council.

The meeting concluded at 7.26 p.m.