

UNADOPTED

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF
MALVERN TOWN COUNCIL

held remotely via Zoom on

Wednesday 16 December 2020 at 6.00 pm

Councillors

Present

N Morton (Chairman)
L Lambeth (Vice Chairman)
C Bovey
S Charles
J Dallow
C Hooper
J Leibrandt
L Lowton
P Mewton
J O'Donnell
C Palmer
J Satterthwaite
P Smith
S Taylor
P Tuthill
D Watkins

Absent

N Houghton
R McLaverty-Head
N Mills
A Stitt

Also in attendance

L Blake - Town Clerk
L Wall – Minute Clerk

4 members of the public

259. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence received from Cllrs Nick Houghton, Ronan McLaverty-Head, Neville Mills and Aidan Stitt were noted.

260. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

261. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the following meeting be approved and adopted as a correct record of the proceedings, to be signed by the Mayor in due course:

- Full Council meeting 11 November 2020.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Maddy Pennock stated her support for the Town Council in securing Malvern Hills College as an asset of community value. She said that she and many other residents had benefitted from the courses offered over the years, and it was vitally important that this important asset was not lost. Many people could not travel as far as Pershore or Evesham as an alternative and the closure of the college would

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certainly contribute to unemployment in the area as people were less able to take advantage of the vocational courses.

Jude Taylor also spoke in support of keeping the college open, as she too, along with many friends, had completed courses there that had enabled them to go on to gain degrees and other higher education qualifications.

262. **MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Mayor expressed his disappointment that the District Council had once again changed the date of a planning meeting to coincide with the Town Council's budget meeting, which meant that some of the Town Councillors had to choose whether to attend the district meeting in their role as district councillors or to attend Town Council for the important item of approving the budget. He said that he intended to write to the Chief Executive to address this problem. Members agreed that this matter needed to be resolved and felt that it was unfair for the District Council to change their meeting dates without referring to the Town Council's scheduled meetings, the dates of which were set out in May each year.

The Mayor then thanked Town Council staff for their hard work in putting together a very successful Christmas window trail, which he had completed as well as judging the window displays with Cllr Dean Clarke of MHDC. The Mayor also thanked the Operations Team for keeping the cemetery in such good order, which had resulted in a lot of positive comments on social media.

The Mayor reported that the festive cheer bags had proved a success, and some had already been dispatched to the food bank for distribution. It was unfortunate that the food bank was seeing such a high demand, reflecting the many people in need of help, but he thanked the county councillors who had donated funds towards the bags and Town Council staff for putting them together.

Finally, the Mayor reminded members that there was a food market in the centre of Malvern this weekend and that some shops in the refurbished Brays building were now trading, with talks ongoing over placement of bike racks and the extension of parking time limits from an hour to 90 minutes, to help local businesses get established and encourage footfall.

263. **TOWN CLERK'S REPORT**

20 mph speed limits – following the Notice of Motion and discussions at Operations and Planning committee, two locations had been agreed and these had been put forward to Sarah Gilmour at WCC for consideration; a reply is awaited.

Cllr Lou Lowton joined the meeting at 6.20 pm

The festive cheer boxes and Christmas window trail had been a great success with the events team pulling out all the stops to get the letters made for shop windows and the cheer bags packed with lots of festive treats. The Events Co-ordinator, Clare Lawrence, had hand-made over fifty individually designed letters

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to go in the windows, whilst Lyndsey Davies had co-ordinated the purchase of the festive cheer bag contents and then packed and labelled them all, ready for distribution.

All Town Council services have continued to operate as normal, despite some staff shortages.

The surface for the new basketball courts is about to be shipped over to avoid higher tariffs following Brexit in January and will be stored locally until it can be installed on site.

The Victoria Park Pavilion project will resume in the New Year having been put on hold during the Operations Manager's absence.

The order has now been placed for the new IT equipment and this will be installed in January.

The transfer of land at Mill Lane has been delayed whilst solicitors sort out an access issue but will hopefully be completed early in the New Year.

The flats at the rear of Belle Vue Terrace will both be let shortly, with tenants moving into the middle flat in the next few days and into the top floor flat in January.

264. REPORTS BY COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES IN ATTENDANCE

Written reports had been received from Cllr John Raine (WCC) and Cllr Julie Wood (MHDC) and these had been distributed ahead of the meeting.

COUNTY REPORTS

Cllr Paul Tuthill – Jonathan Pryce - currently Assistant Chief Fire Officer - has been appointed to the post of Chief Fire Officer. Also, a recent advertisement for new full time fire fighters had received nearly 800 applications including from over 100 current on-call fire fighters and these had been whittled down to thirty people who were now being trained.

At a recent meeting of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Chief Executive had given a presentation on the challenges being faced with staff shortages in the maternity sector and a backlog in diagnostics due to the extra safety measures having to be followed. The Chief Executive had stressed that the best thing people could do to help was to follow the current government guidelines for Covid-19.

At WCC, the main focus was on helping businesses in the area get back to normal as soon as possible.

Cllr James O'Donnell – at a meeting with John Campion, Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia, discussions were held on 20 mph speed limits and VAS signs, and it was noted that there was an under-used budget for hard infrastructure, and this was something the Town Council may be able to apply for.

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Other topics discussed were the problems encountered by the Safer Road Partnership in engaging with councils, community groups and sports officers. There was a noticeable increase in the use of drugs in the local area and a recognition of various areas suffering from pockets of crime.

Cllr O'Donnell was also involved in ongoing discussions over on-road parking issues, parking time restrictions and the possibility of a third pedestrian road crossing in Malvern.

DISTRICT REPORTS

Cllr Cynthia Palmer – thanked the refuse collectors again for their consistent hard work, having never missed a collection throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.

Cllr Palmer also informed members that the homeless were once again being accommodated in Fownes Hotel in Worcester as the Salvation Army building in Newtown Road could not be used, due to only having communal facilities.

Boffy Markets Ltd were one of four finalists in the Farmers' Market of the Year category of the Farm Retail Awards, and this was good news for this local market.

Cllr Palmer is chairing a group looking at poverty and debt and it has become evident that these issues were now spread over a very wide area and continued to be monitored, whilst the food bank and CAB helped with their vital work.

Cllr Sam Charles – thanked the Town Council, the Autumn in Malvern Festival and County Councillors for their help in funding projects such as Malvern's Special Families and Maggs Day Centre, which were now fully funded and assisting many local people.

265. TOWN COUNCIL WARD REPORTS/REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

OUTSIDE BODIES

Cllr Clive Hooper – had attended a meeting of the Malvern Hills Area Committee for CALC which had looked at zoom etiquette and how councils were coping with Covid restrictions. The Senior Project Manager at WCC had given a presentation with an update on superfast broadband in the Worcestershire area.

Cllr Cynthia Palmer – had attended the AGM of Community Action and reported that CA continued to carry out their work in combatting loneliness within the community, which due to Covid restrictions meant that they had had to find other ways to help, such as delivering a summer Strawberry Tea and a Christmas Tea, dropped off to vulnerable and isolated people. Staff continued to work from home and the Town Council grant had been much appreciated in allowing them to continue with their work.

The Chairman asked Cllr Palmer to pass on his thanks, on behalf of Malvern Food Bank, to Community Action for their help in delivering the food bank parcels.

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WARD REPORTS

Cllr Sam Charles (Chase ward) – raised the issue of the major traffic problems in Poolbrook Road as a result of utility works. She asked the County Councillors to check on the progress of this work.

Cllr Neil Morton (Chase ward) – had met with a director and site agent at Persimmon Homes regarding the development at Qinetiq and had been given assurances that they would keep residents better informed, there would be a monthly site meeting and they would also put in place a procedure for residents to submit comments and questions. Cllr Sam Charles volunteered to attend the monthly meeting in her capacity as district councillor.

266. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

A question had been submitted by Cllr Paul Tuthill and answered by the Mayor, as per the report for the meeting.

267. NOTICE OF MOTION – MALVERN HILLS COLLEGE

Cllr Hooper presented his Notice of Motion regarding the proposed closure of Malvern Hills College. He explained that the college was considered by the Warwickshire Colleges Group to be unviable, but that its closure would deprive the residents of Malvern of much-valued educational and community facilities. Securing Asset of Community Value status will help to protect the site and buildings from being developed for non-community purposes. Malvern Town Council is able to apply for this status as a town council; MHDC as a district council are the authority that makes judgement on an application. Therefore, Cllr Hooper proposed that the Town Council should seek to secure its status as an Asset of Community Value as a first step to ensure viable educational and community use at this site.

A discussion followed and it was evident that many members had attended various courses at the college over the years and felt that they had benefitted greatly. Cllr Lambeth had taught there and emphasised that it was not only an arts institution but served to teach literacy and numeracy skills as well, to help people get back to work.

Cllr Taylor felt that it would be important to modernise the courses in the future, to consider the changing world, and to encourage younger students to take up further education.

A task and finish group of around 15 people had already been formed by Cllr Tom Wells, including Cllrs Hooper and Palmer. It was suggested that Cllr Stitt's name be put forward to represent the younger generation, whilst Cllr Leibrandt and Cllr O'Donnell also expressed an interest in participating.

It was **AGREED** that Cllr Hooper and Cllr Palmer should continue on the task and finish group as representatives of the Town Council, reporting back regularly, and

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would also put forward the names of the three councillors above to be considered for membership.

It was **RESOLVED** that Malvern Town Council notes with concern the proposed closure of Malvern Hills College by the Warwickshire Colleges Group (WCG), and records its wish to preserve the site and buildings as an educational and community asset. With this in mind, the Council should seek to secure its status as an Asset of Community Value (within the terms of the Localism Act 2011), by making an immediate application for this to Malvern Hills District Council.

268. **BUDGET 2021/22**

Report CL01/20 was received and accepted.

The Town Clerk presented to Full Council recommendations in respect of the proposed budget and precept level for 2021/22. The budget had been put together including all items requested by the Budget Working Party, the Operations and Planning Committee and the Audit Committee. This included keeping the precept at the same level as the previous year.

The Town Clerk explained any pertinent parts of the proposed budget and answered members' questions. The Chairman thanked the Town Clerk for all her work in preparing the budget and said that by keeping the precept at the same level this year, it sent an important message to the people of Malvern that the Town Council recognised the ongoing hardships in the community but were committed to keeping up the high standards of the services it provided.

Cllr Hooper wished to record his thanks to the Town Clerk and Policy and Resources Budget Working Party in completing a difficult task this year.

It was **RESOLVED** to accept the following:

- i. The re-forecast for 2020/21 which results in an underspend and therefore a balance being put into reserves of £6,086 for the financial year.
- ii. The budget for the financial year 2021/22 which shows a net expenditure of £694,750 *not* taking into account any movements in Earmarked Reserves and £682,750 taking into account movements in Earmarked Reserves

It was **RESOLVED** that the precept for 2021/22 should be set at £682,890. This is the same level as in 2020/21.

269. **AUDIT COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS**

Report CL02/20 was received and accepted.

Cllr Palmer, Chairman of the Audit Committee, presented the recommendations for approval by Full Council from the meeting held on 19 November 2020.

All three recommendations were taken en bloc and it was **RESOLVED** that no changes be made to the Purchase Order Control System, the Internal Controls in Processing Invoices for Payment or the Petty Cash Procedure, as a review of these control systems had concluded that they were both robust and adequate.

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270. **OPERATIONS AND PLANNING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS**

Report CL03/20 was received and accepted.

Cllr Charles, Chairman of the Operations and Planning Committee, presented the recommendations for approval by Full Council from the meeting held on 25 November 2020.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council supports and facilitates the provision of bike racks within the Town to support and encourage cycling as well as supporting the Council's declaration of a climate emergency in 2019, with funding of £3,000.

271. **POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS**

Report CL04/20 was received and accepted.

Cllr Hooper, Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee presented the recommendations for approval by Full council from the meeting held on 2 December 2020.

It was **RESOLVED** to leave the Council's investment amounts unchanged for the present time but to review these investments again next year.

272. **EMISSIONS AND WASTE TASK AND FINISH GROUP**

The Town Clerk gave a report on the recent meeting of the Emissions and Waste Task and Finish Group at which the provision of recycling bins in the town had been discussed. The group continued to research various aspects of providing these bins, including suitability of sites, type of bins, and how they would be emptied. As part of this, there was to be joint working with MHDC and a meeting to be held in the New Year with Cllr John Raine and Alex Bill of MHDC. The Task and Finish Group were due to meet again in January prior to presenting recommendations to the Operations and Planning Committee at its meeting in February.

273. **SPECIAL COMMUNITY GRANT**

Following the request of Full Council at its last meeting, the Town Clerk had contacted Age UK and Community Action to ask them to provide an update on their use of the special grants awarded in the summer. Responses had been received and formed part of the reports pack for the meeting.

Some members felt that these responses were sufficient whilst others felt that more information could and should be provided, as it was public money that had been awarded.

The Town Clerk reminded members that this year had seen unprecedented times and that these grants had been a quick response to requests for help in providing vital services to the community. Whilst the grant scheme had now been changed, with more information being requested at the time of awarding a grant, Age UK and CA had not been specifically asked to fulfil any criteria at the time of the

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award. However, the Town Clerk was asked to contact them again to ask for a fuller breakdown of figures.

274. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the date of the next meeting of Full Council would be Wednesday 3 February 2021 at 6.00pm, to be held remotely via Zoom.

The Mayor wished everyone a very happy Christmas and hoped that 2021 would be a better year for all. He also thanked councillors and staff for their help and support during the year which had supported local businesses and enabled them to keep trading during very difficult times. The Mayor asked the Town Clerk to pass on his thanks to staff.

The meeting finished at 7.45 pm.

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(Chairman)

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