

**MINUTES OF FULL COUNCIL MEETING OF
MALVERN TOWN COUNCIL**

**held in the Council Chamber, Belle Vue Terrace, Malvern
on Wednesday 13 December 2023, at 6.00 pm**

Councillors

Present

C Hooper (Chair)
S Austin
M Birks
C Bovey
A Cherry
C Fletcher
J Green
N Houghton
M Jones
J Leibrandt (from 6.05pm)
J MacLusky
F Matthews-Jones
R McLaverty-Head
D Mead
K Newbigging
D Watkins

Absent

I Dawson (apologies)
C Lee
L Lowton (apologies)
S Meager (apologies)

Also in attendance

L Blake – Town Clerk
C Porter – Operations Manager
L Wall – Minute Clerk

105. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were **NOTED** from Councillors Iain Dawson, Lou Lowton and Simon Meager.

106. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Agenda item 9 Budget 2024/25 – Cllr Karen Newbigging declared an interest as an allotment holder.

107. 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, and they were signed by the Mayor:

- Full Council meeting 8 November 2023.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None.

108. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor gave a brief report on the following engagements that he had attended since the last meeting:

- Remembrance commemorations
 - Placing a wreath on the train to Paddington station
 - Chairman of Worcestershire County Council's service at County Hall
 - Cross planting at Great Malvern Priory

- Joint service between the Priory and Malvern Town Council followed by laying of wreaths at the war memorial, Great Malvern Library
- Cadet parade through Malvern
- The Mayor thanked all those who helped marshal the event and man the road closures

Cllr Josephine Leibrandt joined the meeting at 6.05pm

- Lighting of the buzzards sculpture in Rose Bank Gardens in purple light for Pancreatic Cancer awareness month
- 17 November - meeting with Cllr Beverley Nielsen and Cllr Mike Rouse regarding local highway issues; Worcestershire County Council would now take action on some of these
- 23 November – visited the Avenue Care Home where they have monthly activities, which on this occasion was packing supplies for homeless people with the Hand on Heart charity
- 25 November – attended the Christmas lights switch on event in Great Malvern. This was a very well attended event and the grotto raised £1,103. The Mayor thanked the two councillors who had acted as Father Christmas and other volunteers and staff who had helped on the day, in particular staff members Linda, Charles and Lyndsey
- 26 November – attended the unveiling of a plaque to mark the restoration of the historic donkey shed in Happy Valley Road (carried out by Malvern Hills Trust)
- 30 November – attended the Worcester Victorian Christmas Fayre
- 1 December – attended the Malvern Link Christmas lights switch on event
- 2 December - attended the opening of the new St Richard's Hospice shop in Barnards Green
- 8 December – visited The Oaks Care Home and enjoyed chatting to staff and residents
- 9 December – attended the Friends of Malvern carol service, and the switching on of lights on the tree in Great Malvern Priory Church
- 12 December – judged the traders' Christmas wreath competition, results to be announced shortly

109. UPDATE ON TOWN COUNCIL OPERATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

The Town Clerk reported as follows:

Community hub at Victoria Park - the project was now progressing swiftly; two meetings had been held recently with the contractor Modulek and the Chair of the Victoria Park Task and Finish Group to discuss finer details of specifications and sign off some design elements. It was hoped the contractors would be on site in early February 2024, with completion of the building around the end of April to the middle of May.

Pump Track at Adam Lee – the final track design had been agreed, a minor planning issue was still to be resolved and this involved a submission under a certificate of lawful development rather than permitted development, following advice received from officers at Malvern Hills District Council (MHDC).

Christmas Festival – officers felt that the event held this November had the highest attendance ever, although the grotto was perhaps not as busy as last year. However, it still raised a large amount of money for the Mayor's charity.

Malvern Link and Barnards Green - Christmas trees had been erected in these centres and the Christmas event in Malvern Link had been attended by a member of staff to ensure the lights switch on went well.

Electric Vehicle – the new vehicle had finally arrived and was now in use by the Operations Team.

Gas Lamp, Peachfield Common – the insurance claim had now been settled and the repaired lamp would be reinstated the following week.

New litter bin – a new bin had been installed on St Andrews Road near QinetiQ following a request from a member of public.

Belle Vue Terrace – the cellar had been emptied of all old files and paperwork in preparation for moving offices.

The Mayor then made a statement saying that over the past few months a lot of work had been going on in the offices, such as:

- Remembrance Celebrations
- Erection of Christmas Lights and the Christmas Lights switch on event
- Work towards a resolution to the land slippage issue in Rose Bank Gardens
- Sale of Belle Vue Terrace
- Works to progress the new community hub building at Victoria Park which had been time consuming over the last month
- Last but by no means least, the huge amount of work involved in putting the budget together

and he wished to thank Linda, Charles, Lyndsey and other staff for the large amount of very impressive and high-quality work that they had been putting in.

Cllr Houghton emphasised how much work the staff do on a day-to-day basis, something he had witnessed when Mayor, and that the extra projects and problems that had arisen this year would have merited a special team in his line of business, and so it was even more important to acknowledge staff efforts and thank them accordingly.

REPORTS BY COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES IN ATTENDANCE

Written reports had been submitted by Cllr Malcolm Victory and Cllr Fran Victory, and these had been circulated to all Town Councillors prior to the meeting.

Cllr David Mead, Barnards Green Ward, reported that he had attended a meeting with two officers from Worcestershire County Council regarding the relocation of the nursery in the Sunshine Centre. It was hoped that a resolution would be forthcoming.

He also informed the meeting that an enforcement notice had now been served regarding traffic problems at the Old Barrack Stores site at the junction of Court Road and St Andrews Road.

110. TOWN COUNCIL WARD REPORTS/REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

Cllr Freya Matthews-Jones, Link Ward – Cllr Matthews-Jones advised councillors that she had been made aware of an article in the press regarding possible future cuts in the number of fire engines at stations across Worcestershire and a public consultation was to be held in early January 2024. She asked councillors to look out for further details and comment as individuals when the occasion arose as there would not be time to bring it back to Full Council.

Although some members felt that the Council should comment as a whole on this important issue, the Town Clerk advised that the next Full Council meeting was 14 February which would be too late.

It was **NOTED** that the Town Clerk would write to Worcestershire Fire Service to say that the Town Council would like to be involved in the public consultation.

111. MEMBERS QUESTIONS

None.

112. BUDGET 2024/25

Report CL01/23 was received and accepted and in the absence of the Chair of Policy and Resources Committee, Cllr Iain Dawson, the Vice-chair Cllr Clive Fletcher presented the recommendations.

Cllr Fletcher explained that although he had not been present at the previous Policy and Resources Committee meeting when the budget recommendations had been made, he had met with the Town Clerk to discuss the budget and report.

Members had considered the re-forecast for 2023/24 and also the figures presented by the Town Clerk for the budget 2024/25. Members had felt that whilst the proposed increase in precept was high, it was necessary to ensure the continued provision of services and projects.

He acknowledged that there had been a degree of uncertainty in setting the budget not least because of factors such as the move from the building at Belle Vue Terrace to Victoria Park.

The contingency sum had been increased from £20,000 to £60,000 to reflect this uncertainty around costs for the new building at Victoria Park as well as for the resolution of the landslip in Rose Bank Gardens.

Taking all of these factors and input from the Operations and Planning Committee into account, the resulting budget was £828,500, an increase in the precept of 9.4%, based on the current housing stock. If the housing stock increased, it would have the effect of reducing the percentage increase, but the figure was as yet unknown.

The Town Clerk added that it had been the most difficult budget so far to set, and the resulting figures were higher than she would have liked. However, all costs had been considered critically, and projects brought forward where possible. Any further cuts would mean a reduction in the number or quality of services offered and therefore were not advised. The true figures of the tax base were expected to be received shortly.

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

- i. **The re-forecast for 2023/24 which brings expenditure close to the budget, with a small underspend for the year and a balance being put into reserves of £324.**
- ii. **The budget for the financial year 2024/25 – attached as ‘Proposed Budget 2024 – 2025’ This shows a net expenditure of:**
£939,280 *not* taking into account any movements in Earmarked Reserves
£828,280 taking into account movements in Earmarked Reserves and other funding
- iii. **The precept for 2024/25 should be set at £828,500. This reflects an increase of 9.4% from the precept level in 2023/24.**

113. NOTICE OF MOTION – MALVERN TOURISM SIGNS IN MALVERN LINK AND BARNARDS GREEN

Cllr Nick Houghton presented his Notice of Motion that proposed installing tourism signs in Malvern Link and Barnards Green. Whilst he was mindful that previous discussions around the budget had included an increase in the precept, he felt that it was important to support the areas of Malvern Link and Barnards Green and initial talks with traders in Malvern Link had shown support for this.

Cllr Ronan McLaverty-Head seconded the Notice of Motion, saying he had seen many of these types of signs in different towns, and they were a popular tourism attraction. He felt it was only fair to the residents and traders of Malvern Link and Barnards Green to have the same opportunity of a sign as Great Malvern had.

The Town Clerk confirmed that there was no provision for this cost in the budget and if it was agreed, funding would need to be taken from reserves.

Councillors agreed that the idea of the signs was a good one that should be investigated further, but that the time was not right for this type of expenditure.

It was **RESOLVED** to defer the notice of motion to install tourism signs in Malvern Link and Barnards Green for twelve months.

114. NOTICE OF MOTION – “HAPPY TO CHAT” BENCHES

Cllr Julie MacLusky presented her Notice of Motion to introduce “Happy to Chat” benches in Rose Bank Gardens and Victoria Park by funding and installing one plaque on a bench in each location.

Cllr MacLusky explained that the idea was worldwide now, and she had experienced it first-hand recently when a stranger sat by her on one of these benches and started talking. She felt it was an excellent way to help combat loneliness among all ages.

It was recognised that not all people wanted to chat and therefore there would only be one bench per area. Officers would research designs and these would be brought to a future council meeting.

It was **RESOLVED** that Council would support the introduction of “Happy to Chat” benches in Rose Bank Gardens and Victoria Park by funding and installing a plaque for one bench in each location.

115. OPERATIONS AND PLANNING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

Report CL02/23 was received and accepted and the Chair of Operations and Planning Committee, Cllr David Mead, presented the recommendations from the meeting held on 29 November:

Minute 59 Victoria Park Skateboard Park Refurbishment and Consultation

It was **RESOLVED** to hold a public consultation for the future of the skateboard park in Victoria Park, to be carried out in February/March 2024.

Minute 61 Lease of Dukes Meadow Pavilion

It was **RESOLVED** that the offer of a five-year lease to Malvern Youth and Junior Football Club should be removed. The football club would be asked to pay all outstanding bills and to submit a development plan ahead of a review date in August 2024 when a lease would be reconsidered.

116. VICTORIA PARK TASK AND FINISH GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS

Report CL03/23 was received and accepted and the Chair of the Victoria Park Task and Finish Group, Cllr David Mead, presented the recommendations from the meeting held on 7 December 2023.

It was **RESOLVED** to carry out works required to remove the hedge alongside the play area, remove the toddler climbing frame and swings and reposition the zip wire as soon as possible ahead of onsite building works due to commence on 12 February 2024.

It was **RESOLVED** that Officers should be delegated to go out to tender for a new café tenant at Victoria Park with recommendations on the tender award being brought back to Full Council in March 2024.

Cllr Josephine Leibrandt left the meeting at 7.55pm

117. HEART OF ENGLAND IN BLOOM/BITAIN IN BLOOM 2024

Report CL04/23 was received and noted.

The Town Clerk explained that an invitation had been received to enter the National Britain in Bloom finals for 2024. Although this was very prestigious and a recognition of high achievement, officers knew from previous experience that it would necessitate a huge amount of extra work at a time when resources would already be stretched because of other large projects already in progress.

Members agreed that it was not the right time to be taking on extra work and pressures, and supported the Town Clerk and Operations Manager in making their difficult recommendation.

It was **RESOLVED** that the invitation to enter the National Britain in Bloom finals in 2024 be declined.

118. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the date of the next meeting would be Wednesday 14 February 2024 at 6.00 pm.

The meeting finished at 8.00 pm

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(Chairman)