

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

**held in the Council Chamber, Belle Vue Terrace, Malvern
on Wednesday 10 April 2024, at 6.00 pm**

Councillors

Present

C Hooper (Chair)
S Austin
M Birks
C Bovey
A Cherry
I Dawson
J Green
N Houghton
M Jones
J Leibrandt (from 6.15pm)
L Lowton
J MacLusky
F Matthews-Jones
D Mead
S Meager
K Newbigging
D Watkins

Absent

C Fletcher (apologies)
R McLaverty-Head (apologies)

Also in attendance

L Blake – Town Clerk
L Wall – Minute Clerk

Annie Robson, CEO Citizens Advice SW
2 members of the public

152. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were **NOTED** from Councillors Clive Fletcher and Ronan McLaverty-Head, and for lateness from Councillor Josephine Leibrandt.

153. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

154. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Minutes of meeting held on 14 February 2024

Cllr Birks had raised a query over the accuracy of these minutes on behalf of the member of the public who had spoken in the public participation section. Cllr Birks thanked the Town Clerk for providing a transcription of the minutes and said that she was happy that what had been reported in the minutes was in fact accurate.

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 14 February 2024 be approved and adopted as a correct record of the proceedings, to be signed by the Mayor.

Minutes of meeting held on 6 March 2024

Cllr Hooper proposed a series of amendments to be incorporated into the minutes.

Minute 146 Draft Calendar of meetings 2024/25

Paragraph 1 - original

At its meeting on 14 February, Full Council had resolved to start all meetings at 6.30pm but following the meeting a contractual issue had been raised, and therefore to comply with standing orders when reconsidering a decision, the matter had been referred to Policy and Resources Committee.

Paragraph 1 - amended

At its meeting on 14 February, Full Council had resolved to start all meetings at 6.30pm but following the meeting a contractual issue had been raised with the Town Clerk which might cause the Council to wish to reconsider its decision; therefore to comply with standing orders when reversing a decision, the matter had to be referred to Policy and Resources Committee.

Paragraph 2 - original

Policy and Resources Committee has staffing responsibilities and considered the matter at its meeting on 28 February, at which they recommended to reverse the decision made on 14 February to change the start times for 2024/25 in light of legal advice. Meeting times would therefore revert to the usual start time of 6pm.

Paragraph 2 – amended

As the Policy and Resources Committee has staffing responsibilities, it considered the matter at its meeting on 28 February, when a recommendation was made to reverse the decision of 14 February to change the start times for 2024/25 in light of legal advice which had been sought by the Town Clerk from CALC and was presented orally to the meeting.

Paragraph 5 - original

Members discussed at length whether the decision made at the Full Council meeting on 14 February had been a legal one and agreed that even if councillors were in favour of a later start time for meetings, it had been wrong not to consult with staff first.

Paragraph 5 – amended

Members discussed at length whether the decision made at the Full Council meeting on 14 February had been a legal one, and that even if councillors were in favour of a later start time for meetings, whether it had been wrong not to consult with staff first.

Paragraph 7 - original

It was **RESOLVED** to reverse the decision made on 14 February to change the start times of meetings for 2024/25 in light of legal advice. Meeting times would therefore revert to the usual start time of 6pm and this matter could be considered again in six months' time in line with standing orders.

Paragraph 7 – amended

It was **RESOLVED** to reverse the decision made on 14 February to change the start times of meetings for 2024/25 in light of the legal advice presented. Meeting times would therefore revert to the usual start time of 6pm and this matter could be considered again in six months' time in line with standing orders.

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 6 March 2024 as amended be approved and adopted as a correct record of the proceedings, to be signed by the Mayor.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Carolyn Withington had attended the meeting to speak on traffic problems in Court Road, which were causing serious concerns over child and pedestrian safety.

She said that the road is a very busy one, with parents taking young children to Malvern Parish and Great Malvern C of E primary schools, students going to The Chase School and Malvern College, as well as residents going to and from Barnards Green; all of whom were in danger as there were many HGVs using the road, cars driving on pavements and no crossing person since the last one had retired.

There had been several accidents recently and residents would like to see measures brought in to improve the environment and wellbeing of residents in Court Road.

Cllr Josephine Leibrandt joined the meeting at 6.15pm.

Suggestions from residents included the road becoming a low-traffic neighbourhood, developing an active travel corridor, and introducing other traffic calming measures, and they would welcome any support the Town Council could give in this matter.

Councillors were in support of helping with this matter and the Chair explained that it may be possible to approach the local county councillor for help. Cllr Birks said that she already chaired a traffic calming group in Malvern Wells and would be happy to take such a role in the short-term regarding Court Road. It was agreed that Cllr Birks would approach Cllr Malcolm Victory, MHDC councillor for Barnards Green to see if he could also help.

155. PRESENTATION BY ANNIE ROBSON, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF CITIZENS ADVICE SOUTH WORCESTERSHIRE ON COMMUNITY SUPPORT GRANT APPLICATION AND WORK OF CITIZENS ADVICE

A grant application from Citizens Advice South Worcestershire (CASW) had been considered at the previous Policy and Resources Committee meeting but Annie Robson, CEO, had been unable to attend. She had therefore attended this meeting to give a brief overview of Citizens Advice and answer any questions councillors may have had.

She explained that although it was a national organisation, Citizens Advice had individual offices which were independent charities. They offered free support to people, mainly dealing with poverty, debt advice, benefits, housing, employment, and consumer issues. More recently, they were involved in a project called Social Prescribing, in conjunction with Malvern Town Primary Care Network (PCN).

This was to deal with the significant increase in the number of people presenting low level mental health issues to GPs, when many of them actually required support dealing with the core social issues.

CASW had seen an increase in the number of people contacting them over the past 2-3 years, as a result of the cost-of-living crisis. The aim was to reach the most vulnerable within the community, but they were also dealing with people who would not have required help in the past, working with them on household budgets to see where savings could be made.

In 2023 they helped 2482 people from the South Worcestershire area which included Wychavon and Malvern Hills. Of those, 59% were from Malvern Town wards.

Annie Robson felt that the organisation was very good at what it did, being a 'lean' charity in terms of staff with 31 paid members of staff and 85 volunteers across the whole of the organisation.

They also helped people overcome adverse decisions made by the DWP, and as a community organisation with national branding, sought to influence social policy decision making through MPs and local councillors. From data collected, they were able to tell the story of those living in the local community and what affected them the most.

Councillors were in support of the Citizens Advice South Worcestershire, and commended them on their work. They also asked if the recent initiative to have a CASW representative at the food bank would continue, and Annie Robson replied that they had a three-year contract with Malvern and Upton which had commenced the previous year. They already operated out of other food banks and it was hoped that this would continue as it had proved very successful.

Councillors thanked Annie for the hard work carried out by CASW and agreed it was a worthy organisation to support.

156. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor reported on the following engagements that he had attended since the last meeting:

- 18 March – Great Malvern Traders Group meeting, discussed Christmas events
- 21 March – St Richard's Gala Dinner celebrating 40 years, at Worcester Cathedral, raising an impressive £40,000
- 28 March - Had met with Cllr Palmer and the new CEO of the Malvern Hills Trust, Deborah Fox
- 7 April - Evesham Town Council Civic Service

157. UPDATE ON TOWN COUNCIL OPERATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

The Town Clerk reported as follows:

Community Hub Building - this project had been the major focus over the past month and more details would follow in the later agenda item.

Happy to Chat benches – these had now been installed in Rose Bank Gardens, Victoria Park and Station Gardens. The Malvern Gazette had covered the story with a great photograph of Cllr MacLusky and Cllr Watkins. Cllr MacLusky was congratulated for her radio interview on BBC Hereford and Worcester.

Staff Vacancy - the role of Events and Communications Officer on the administration staff had been advertised with a closing date of Monday 22 April.

Town Council Vacancy - the Councillor vacancy in St Joseph's Ward had been advertised with the intention that co-option should take place at the Annual Council meeting in May.

Malvern Bagnères Twinning Association - Officers had been working with the Bagnères de Bigorre Twinning Group to try and boost their membership and as a result an information evening would be hosted ahead of the Annual Town Meeting on 18 April.

Ukraine Twinning – liaison officers at MHDC had taken a letter from MTC to the Mayor of Korosten who was delighted to hear of the positive news with regards to possible twinning arrangements.

Operations Update – Operational team members had been on a number of training courses whilst the weather had been wet including manual handling, chainsaw safety and first aid. Other jobs recently completed included power washing all the bus shelters, whilst grass cutting would start soon.

Peaks Challenge – approximately 85 tickets had been sold, with most people opting for the long walk. The walk had been publicised in the Malvern Gazette.

Christmas Lights Switch On – preparations were starting for the switch on event in November 2024.

158. REPORTS BY COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES IN ATTENDANCE

Written reports had been submitted by Cllr Malcolm Victory, (MHDC Barnards Green ward and WCC Malvern Chase division) and Cllr Natalie McVey (MHDC West ward and WCC Malvern Trinity Division) prior to the meeting, and these had been circulated to members.

Cllr David Mead, District Councillor for Barnards Green, reported that he was still involved with matters at the Sunshine Children’s Centre but was unable to report more as all information was still confidential.

159. TOWN COUNCIL WARD REPORTS/REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

None.

160. MEMBERS QUESTIONS

None.

161. NEW COMMUNITY HUB AT VICTORIA PARK

The Town Clerk reported that works were progressing including the installation of the power supply, water, drainage, underground attenuation tanks, cladding, windows, solar panels, air conditioning and heat pump units, brickwork and flooring.

Some issues had inevitably arisen during the works but the Town Clerk and Operations Manager were able to address these by making frequent site visits.

A patio was being laid at the meeting room end of the building so that the doors could be opened up and the space used as an extension to the meeting room, or for bands/other outdoor events. Funds earmarked for the landscaping would be used for this versatile area.

Once the contract was finished, there would be a period for handover and landscaping, and the fencing would remain in place during this time.

The Town Council would hopefully be able to move into the building in mid-June.

162. NEW COMMUNITY HUB AT VICTORIA PARK - CCTV

Report CL01/24 was received and accepted.

The report recommended that CCTV was installed at the new community hub at Victoria Park.

It was **RESOLVED** to install CCTV on the new community hub at Victoria Park.

163. VICTORIA PARK SKATEBOARD PARK REFURBISHMENT AND CONSULTATION

Report CL02/24 was received and accepted.

The Town Clerk reported that although the public consultation and online survey had resulted in good engagement with the public and lots of ideas being put forward, there would still be some work required on getting to a final design stage.

Most people attending the consultation event in Malvern Link expressed the importance of getting the design right, rather than rushing to get the new skatepark open. Therefore, although it had originally been hoped to open a new skatepark in 2024, it would more likely be in 2025.

It was noted that responses to the survey were particularly low in the 17-21 years age group and that this could be due to many people in that age group being away at university. For future surveys, this should be taken into account.

Cllr Lou Lowton proposed an amendment to the recommendation to ensure that all user groups were represented in the focus group.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the setting up of a Skatepark Focus Group to take the next steps in creating a proposal for the new skatepark. The focus group would include Town Council officers, Councillors and interested parties from the skatepark community, encouraging a range of skatepark users, to ensure their needs are adequately represented.

It was **RESOLVED** that Councillors Anne Cherry, David Mead and Karen Newbigging would be on the Skatepark Focus Group.

164. **NOTICE OF MOTION – STAFFING COMMITTEE**

Cllr Clive Hooper presented his Notice of Motion, “that the Town Council resolves to consider the establishment of a staffing committee and that a report be submitted to the next meeting of the council making appropriate recommendations.”

Cllr Marilyn Birks seconded the Notice of Motion, saying she supported the establishment of a staffing committee as part of being a responsible employer.

Some councillors felt that as staffing matters were already delegated to Policy and Resources Committee, a separate committee was not required and would usurp Policy and Resources Committee.

Others thought that a separate committee was needed, to support staff and make sure they were all looked after and felt valued.

Under Standing Order 3(x) the Chair proposed that the meeting be extended until 8.15pm.

After a robust discussion, an amendment to the motion was proposed and agreed as follows:

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council proceeds with the establishment of a Staffing Committee and that a report be submitted to the next meeting of the Council, if possible, making appropriate recommendations from a Task and Finish Group comprising five Councillors, set up to examine terms of reference, constitution, membership and other relevant matters.

Nine Councillors volunteered to be on the Task and Finish Group and after three Councillors withdrew their names, it was **AGREED** that membership of the group would be six.

It was **AGREED** that the membership would comprise the following Councillors:

1. Councillor Nick Houghton
2. Councillor Marilyn Birks
3. Councillor Jude Green

4. Councillor Karen Newbigging
5. Councillor Sean Austin
6. Councillor Lou Lowton

A date for the first meeting of the Staffing Committee task and finish group would be arranged shortly.

165. POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

This item was deferred until the next meeting of Full Council.

166. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the date of the next meeting would be Wednesday 15 May 2024 at 6.00pm.

The meeting finished at 8.15pm

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(Chairman)

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