

# LYDNEY TOWN COUNCIL

## MEETING OF THE COUNCIL – 2022/03/14 – 62

Minutes of the meeting held at Watney Hall, 3 Hill Street, Lydney  
on Monday 14<sup>th</sup> March 2022 at 7.00pm.

**PRESENT:** Councillors A Harley (Mayor and Chair of the meeting), S Cave, C Harris, R Holmes, S Holmes, P Macklin, S Stockham, T Saunders, E Taylor and C Vaughan.

Mr S Holley, Town Clerk  
District Councillor Harry Ives

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The Mayor welcomed all present and gave the usual 'housekeeping' announcements.

1. **APOLOGIES**  
Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors J Greenwood, R Kemsley, L Penny and S Thomas-Brown. Councillor W Leach was absent.
2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**  
(i) Councillor S Holmes had previously declared an 'other' interest in the proposed Service Level Agreement with Lydney Community Centre at Agenda item 13.3 in that she was a member of the Community Centre management committee.  
(ii) Councillor Saunders had previously declared an 'other' interest in the proposed Service Level Agreement with the Town Hall at Agenda item 13.3 in that she was the Council's representative on the Town Hall management committee.
3. **OPEN FORUM**  
Other than District Councillor Ives, no members of the public were present.
4. **MINUTES**  
Councillor Harley Proposed that the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 14<sup>th</sup> February 2022 be approved as a correct record. APPROVED with the following Record of Voting: For – 9, Against – 0, Abstention – 1, Absent/Apologies - 5.
5. **REPORTS**  
(i) **District Councillors** – District Councillor H Ives reported that the latest news from Forest of Dean District Council was that it had set its Budget for 2022/23. There would be little change to the services provided, but there were some modest fee increases. A Government funding review was likely to put an end to some District Council income streams with effect from 2023/24 – and overall income could be considerably lower than ever before. The District Council was encouraging applications for the energy bills rebate scheme whereby Council Tax Bands A to D would get £150 off their Council Tax bill. The District Council had plans to plant 700 trees to mark the Queen's Platinum (70<sup>th</sup>) Jubilee, would be sending a scroll to the Queen, and would have a flag-raising event in June. Councillor Ives concluded by referring to a very helpful meeting with Town Councillors to discuss Section 106 ('planning gain') monies available to Lydney.  
(ii) **County Councillor** - The Council noted a written report provided by County Councillor A Preest.

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(iii) Lydney Town Councillors – Councillor T Saunders reported having received a phone call from a resident about grass-cuttings in the Cemetery after the first cut of the year. There had also been a number of comments on social media. The Town Clerk would look into this, but made the immediate comment that the first cut of the year usually left longer grass. When the weather was wet, clippings could stick to headstones even after the staff went round with a blower.

### 6. FINANCIAL MATTERS/RFO REPORT

#### 6.1 Payments

The list of payments was Proposed for approval by Councillor Harris, Seconded by Councillor Holmes and APPROVED with the following Record of Voting: For – 9, Against – 0, Abstention – 1, Absent/Apologies - 5.

#### 6.2 Income and Expenditure Report/Balance Sheet/Bank Reconciliations

The Council NOTED the financial reports for Month 11 (February).

#### 6.3 Year End Virements

The Council unanimously AGREED the recommended schedule of virements.

**Action – Assistant Clerk (Finance)**

#### 6.4 Review of Reserves

(i) The Council considered and unanimously APPROVED the circulated Review of Reserves, including the ambition to build the General Reserve to 50% of budgeted Expenditure.

(ii) In view of the ongoing work on the Strategic Plan, with a number of emerging projects as yet uncoded, the Council also unanimously AGREED that unspent monies at the end of 2021/22 should be carried forward to 2022/23 (to join the unspent monies from 2019/20) in the 'Special Projects' Earmarked Reserve.

(iii) The balances of the Earmarked Reserves (EMRs) were noted. The only change agreed was to merge the Town Regeneration EMR with the Regeneration EMR.

#### 6.5 Investment Strategy

The Council considered a draft Strategy, which was considered far more suitable than the version circulated in February. The Strategy was unanimously APPROVED, subject to the following amendment suggested by the Chair of the Finance and Scrutiny Committee with the support of the Town Clerk/RFO. In the last line of the 'Specified Investments' section insert the text shown in bold: "Deposit in fixed notice accounts **with any UK 'High Street' bank** for higher interest".

**Action – Town Clerk**

#### 6.6 Internal Auditor's Report

(i) The Council received the Internal Auditor's report, arising from her visit on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2022. The report included recommendations for the following: The total amount of expenditure approved at a meeting should be recorded in the Minutes; bank reconciliations to be signed; the authorisation of electronic payments was not secure and presented a significant control weakness; pay increases and changes of hours should be notified to staff in writing; the Council should review an updated Risk Assessment before 31<sup>st</sup> March; reduction in the number of

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financial reports presented at meetings; and the addition of the asset register and updated staff organisation chart to the website.

(ii) The Town Clerk drew attention to the Internal Auditor's note that the OfficeTeam was short staffed "and the reduced team should be congratulated on keeping on top of the accounting function. That said it is apparent that because of the staffing issues, controls are not being implemented as robustly as they should be, and other functions of the Council are also being adversely affected." The Town Clerk assured the Council that the Internal Auditor's recommendations and anything else that may have 'fallen through the gaps' during the previous nine months would be addressed as soon as resources allowed. To that end, a new Assistant Clerk was due to start on 28<sup>th</sup> March and a further improvement in staffing would be discussed in the Confidential Session of this meeting.

**Action – Town Clerk**

### 7. **EVENTS**

Councillor T Saunders gave the good news that the Council had been awarded a Community Grant of £9,910 towards Jubilee activities, to add to the £7,000 already agreed by the Amenities Committee. Also, plans for the Easter Egg Hunt were well in hand, with Councillor L Penny leading on a new art activity.

### 8. **JUBILEE CORNER**

The Council unanimously APPROVED the circulated proposals for the corner of High Street and Templeway West to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. The Town Clerk was requested to check who owned the bus shelter.

**Action – Town Clerk**

### 9. **LYDNEY FORWARD REGENERATION AND COVID RECOVERY PROJECT**

(i) Riverside Walk and River Lyd Enhancement – the Council noted display boards prepared by Councillor S Stockham and that he and Councillor L Penny had put an Action Plan together. The Environment Agency was providing a lot of co-operation. The owners of the B&M store required more information before giving their agreement. District Councillor Ives offered to assist in this.

(ii) Influencing the Development of the Co-op Site – the Council noted that (in accordance with the suggestion made at the Extraordinary Meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> March 2022, the Clerk had submitted a form nominating the Co-op building / site as Asset of Community Value, with a number of potential uses including use as a Doctors' surgery. The Council RESOLVED to endorse this action with the following Record of Voting: For – 5, Against – 3, Abstentions – 2, Absent / Apologies - 5.

(iii) Enhancing the Appearance of the Town Centre – DEFERRED as Councillor R Kemsley was absent.

(iv) Implementation of the Accessibility Report – DEFERRED as Councillor S Thomas-Brown was absent.

(v) Improving Traffic Management and Public transport Facilities – The Council noted a plan circulated by Councillor Stockham, who invited any interested members to an informal meeting to be held on 22<sup>nd</sup> April under the umbrella of the Planning Committee.

### 10. **REVIEW OF THE LYDNEY NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

The Mayor reported that Place Studio had arranged a meeting with key Officers of the District Council to discuss the best way of taking the review forward.

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## 11. REPLACEMENT COUNCIL TRUCK

The Town Clerk invited the Council to consider a range of options, including purchase of a new vehicle for around £30,000, the lease of a new vehicle for around £6,000 per year, or the purchase of a second-hand vehicle around £8,000. The Head Gardener had made enquiries into electric vehicles, but had been told that nothing similar to the current Ford Ranger truck was expected on the market for at least a couple of years. After some consideration, the Council AGREED (i) not to commit to the expense of a new vehicle, (ii) that leasing was not a preferred option, (iii) that a second-hand vehicle costing around £8,000 would be almost as old as the present vehicle and consequently (iv) that Officers be requested to investigate what was available for around £15,000 and to report back to the Council.

**Action – Town Clerk**

## 12. STRATEGIC PLANNING

12.1 There was some frustration that there had been numerous meetings and reports but not yet a draft document for approval. The Mayor and Town Clerk would look to presenting such a draft at the next meeting.

**Action – Town Clerk**

12.2 District Councillor Ives advised that, subsequent to the meeting on Section 106 monies, it was possible that more than £180,000 was available to Lydney, but the District Council had not yet received it from the developers concerned. The Council unanimously PASSED A VOTE OF THANKS to Councillor Ives for his help.

## 13. GRANT APPLICATIONS

13.1 Severnbanks School – Request for £500 towards the construction of a ‘cosy cabin’ to use as an outdoor classroom. DEFERRED for further information, to be considered by the Finance and Scrutiny Committee in June.

13.2 Humanitarian Relief – After much debate and discussion of alternative proposals, the Council RESOLVED to donate £500 to the Red Cross for humanitarian relief, with the following Record of Voting: For – 7, Against – 1, Abstentions – 2, Absent / Apologies - 5.

13.3 Service Level Agreements – The Council APPROVED the draft Service Level Agreements with Lydney Community Centre and Lydney Town Hall, provided by the Council’s Solicitor, subject to alterations for payments and reports to be six-monthly and with regard to the newsletter. The drafts would now be put to the Community Centre and Town Hall for their own approval.

**Action – Town Clerk**

## 14. LYDNEY HARBOUR

(i) The Council NOTED the report provided by Forest of Dean District Council’s Regeneration Officer.

(ii) The Town Clerk advised that the Town Council had installed six new litter bins and three new dog poo bins at the Harbour, purchased by the Environment Agency. The Agency would pay the Council for the installation.

(iii) Councillor S Holmes relayed a view that some newly installed black bollards were a trip hazard and needed some white paint.

**Action – Town Clerk**

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15. **APPOINTMENT TO COMMITTEES AND EXTERNAL BODIES**  
Councillor Vaughan explained that she wished to step down from the Planning and Highways Committee due to her District Council commitments. As five members were absent, the Clerk would send an email inviting nominations/offers.
16. **COMMITTEE BUSINESS REFERRED TO THE COUNCIL AND REPORTS FROM THE CHAIRS OF COMMITTEES, SUB COMMITTEES AND WORKING PARTIES AND FROM LEAD COUNCILLORS**  
(i) Amenities Committee – Nothing to report  
(ii) Burials Committee – Councillor Stockham, the Committee Chair, advised that the Head Gardener was ready to plant along the chain link fence. Planting choices would be left to the Head Gardener with the proviso that they should be affordable, fast growing and resistant.  
(iii) Finance and Scrutiny Committee – Nothing to report.  
(iv) Planning and Highways Committee – The Committee had considered a suggestion in respect of applying a County-wide 20mph zone but had felt that further information was required before the proposal could be recommended to the Council.
17. **ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING**  
To be held in the Community Centre at 7pm on Monday 25<sup>th</sup> April 2022. The Council AGREED to the suggestion that the majority of reports be provided only in the hard copy Annual Report, with only a few speakers. Interested groups could take one of 12 stalls or table displays around the room if they wished to promote their activities or projects. Light refreshments would be provided and, if possible, a band would be engaged to perform.
18. **MEETINGS SCHEDULE FOR THE 2022/23 COUNCIL YEAR**  
The circulated schedule was AGREED, subject to moving a meeting of the Finance and Scrutiny Committee back from November to a date yet to be agreed in October.
19. **RETURN TO COUNCIL CHAMBER FOR FUTURE MEETINGS**  
The Council RESOLVED to continue meeting in Watney Hall at least until its meeting in July, when the matter would be reconsidered.
20. **TOWN CLERK'S REPORT**  
Covered elsewhere in the meeting.
21. **CORRESPONDENCE**  
None.
22. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**  
Monday 11<sup>th</sup> April 2022 – Watney Hall, 3 Hill Street.

## CLOSED SESSION

23. **MOTION TO EXCLUDE THE PUBLIC AND PRESS**  
The Council resolved to continue in 'Closed Session' under the provisions of The Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 as the following business to be conducted was considered to be of a confidential nature.

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*Note:*

*The following Minute is made available to the Public for openness and transparency. Where possible, the Council approves Confidential Minutes with substantially the same content, but with the inclusion of names of individuals or other parties when appropriate. At other times Confidential business (such as legal matters and employment issues) may appear in the Public Minutes only as an Agenda /Minute heading.*

24. **CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES**  
DEFERRED

25. **STAFF MATTERS**

The Council RESOLVED to offer the Temporary Administration Assistant a permanent position as the Senior Administration Officer; at the same rate of pay and with eligibility for the Local Government Pension Scheme.

The meeting closed at 9.52 pm

Chair .....

Date .....

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### **APPENDIX 1**

Save as Word document – physically cut and paste list of Payments (usually item 6.1) onto this page (covering this note) and scan as PDF. Upload the PDF version!