

**KIDDERMINSTER TOWN COUNCIL
TOWN COUNCIL
Minutes of the meeting held at 6pm on Monday 18th March 2024
In the Council Chamber, Wyre Forest House**

Present:

Councillor D.Chambers (Town Mayor), Councillors, R.Bishop, G.Connolly, H.Dyke, K.Gale, N.Gale, D.Hine, B.Hopkins, , F.Oborski (MBE), J. Philips, M.Rayner, D.Ross and E.Stokes.

Hugh Peacocke, Chief Executive
HR/ Office Assistant

60. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor J. Smith
Councillor S. Miah

Absent:

Councillor J.Aston
Councillor S.Rook
Councillor T.Muir

61. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Nil

62. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Nil

63. MINUTES

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the meeting of Kidderminster Town Council held on Wednesday 24 January 2024.

Members noted the draft minutes of the Planning Committee held on 27th February 2024, The Services Committee held on 20th February 2024, the Town Hall Committee held on 22nd February 2024 and The Staffing Committee held on 28th February 2024.

64. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS/ REPORTS

The Mayor announced that this was the last scheduled meeting of the current council and he thanked all the councillors for giving their time completely voluntarily, on behalf of the community. He said that this included more than 120 meetings over the 3 years between the Council and various committees.

The Mayor wished well to the Councillors not seeking re-election, and to those running again in the forthcoming Town Council elections.

65. WEST MERCIA POLICE PRESENTATION

The Mayor welcomed to the meeting PC Derya Mustafa and Charlotte Gunn of West Mercia Police.

PC Mustafa updated the Council with data on shoplifting, anti-social behaviour in the Town Centre, action on E-scooters and graffiti. She also told the Council for plans to add another PC to the Town Centre and to re-introduce the Town Centre Team from September.

The meeting heard about the Force’s partnership work with the BID, with the Shopwatch scheme and with the Council and the BID through the Cleaner, Safer Kidderminster meetings.

She spoke of the Force’s Community engagement programme and encouraged residents to report crime in their area.

Regarding an issue raised by a member of parents taking children to schools with E-Scooters, she said that WMP would take these matters up with the schools concerned.

Members welcomed the return of the Town Centre Team, while pointing out that the Force needed to monitor all the wards in the parish, not just the Town Centre.

The meeting thanked PC Mustafa and West Mercia Police for their attendance and update.

66. TOWN HALL TRANSFORMATION UPDATE

66.1 Members noted the update from the project managers on progress on the Town Hall transformation Project.

66.2 The Mayor welcomed Mr. Dan Mulligan and Mr. Ross Brearley from Howells architects to the meeting.

They gave a presentation on 3 different options for a proposed podium/plinth at the front of the Town Hall. The plinth was designed to provide disabled access to the front entrances to the Town Hall and enhance the public realm at exchange Square. Option 2, which met the accessibility and aesthetic requirements for the brief was recommended to the meeting. It also could potentially save the Council £150,000 on the costs of the original proposal.

Members generally welcomed the revised option 2 but expressed concerns that the heritage assets to the front of the Town Hall (lanterns, balustrades and railings) should be conserved, as far as possible.

A vote was taken on the proposal to approve option 2, with 12 members voting for and Councillor Helen Dyke voting against the proposal.

Resolved: To approve option 2 as presented, subject to the architects working to conserve, as far as possible, the heritage assets at the front of the Town Hall and to have these works integrated into the overall Speller Metcalfe contract at the Town Hall, subject to acceptable pricing approved by Council's project managers and cost surveyors.

66.3 The CEO told the meeting that officers were working to attract external funding towards the costs of the plinth.

Resolved: To approve an application for funds of £95,000 from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund towards the costs of the proposed podium/ plinth.

67. OUTSIDE BODIES

The meeting received reports from Members appointed to represent the Council on outside bodies.

68. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED that pursuant to the provisions of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and press be excluded for the following item as confidential financial information would be discussed.

69. BANKING ARRANGEMENTS

The CEO presented a report recommending that the Council switches its banking arrangements from Barclays Bank to Handelsbanken. The report covered criteria such as security of funds, customer service, security of transactions, interest rates and bank charges.

Resolved: That the Council changes banking providers from Barclays to Handelsbanken.

70. APPOINTMENT OF INTERNAL AUDITORS FOR THE COUNCIL

The CEO told the meeting that the District Council no longer provided internal audit services for the town council. It was therefore an urgent matter for the town council to appoint a new internal auditor. Four providers had been invited to quote and the meeting considered these proposals.

Resolved: To appoint John Henry as Internal Auditors for 23/24 and onwards.

This concluded the official business of the meeting.

The CEO, on behalf of the Staff of the Council, thanked all the members of the Council for their support for staff and their work for the community over the past 3 years.

The meeting concluded at 7.40 pm.