

**KIDDERMINSTER TOWN COUNCIL
TOWN COUNCIL**

**Minutes of the meeting held at 6pm on Wednesday 23rd October 2024
In the Council Chamber, Wyre Forest House**

Present:

Councillors George Connolly (Town Mayor), John Beckingham, Liam Carroll, Vicky Caulfield, Bernadette Connor, Helen Dyke, Nicky Gale, Doug Hine, Steve Hollands, Mary McDonnell, Shazu Miah, Mary Rayner and Daniel Round.

In Attendance

Hugh Peacocke, Chief Executive Officer

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllrs. John Aston, Ben. Brookes, Darren Chambers, Fran Oborski (MBE) and Mike Smith.

The Mayor and the Members present sent their best regards to Cllr. Oborski.

53. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Liam Carroll and Mary McDonnell declared their membership of the Save the Paddling Pool Group.

Councillor Mary Rayner declared her membership of the Friends of St. Georges Park.

Councillor Liam Carroll declared that he is the Council's observer at meetings of the BID board of Directors

54. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

None

55. MINUTES

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the meeting of Kidderminster Town Council held on 4th September 2024.

56. TOWN MAYOR'S REPORT

The meeting received a report from the Town Mayor, Councillor George Connolly, on the events he had supported and attended as Town Mayor and also noted congratulations to the following members of the community in Kidderminster:

- Claire Cashmore who won a silver medal in the Women's PTS5 event at the Paralympics in Paris,
- Izzy White who became the youngest ever woman to be British national Bowls Champion and will head to Australia next year to represent Britain in the World Championships, and

- The Revd. Hayward Osborne, who recently celebrated 50 years in the priesthood and to thank him for his contribution to his congregation at St. Mary and All Saints Church.

57. The Town Centre Team (West Mercia Police)

The Mayor welcomed to the meeting PC's Charlotte Gunn and Simon Reilly, from the Greenhill/ Kidderminster Town Centre Team at West Mercia Police.

The Police presentation included the following points:

- The Town Centre Team was established in September, with 3 designated PC's
- The team wants to be visible in the Town Centre
- Hot Spot Patrols (using policing data and NHS data -"Taking Back Our Streets)- achieving positive results
- Focus on anti-social behaviour, knives and young people
- The Force had seen a 10% reduction in violent crime
- Achieving a return of £2.20 for each pound spent
- CCTV issues
- Benches in the Town Centre
- Partnership working
- Proposed police office in The Swan Centre
- Poor public lighting in some areas

Members raised questions regarding homelessness, begging, ongoing data sharing and liaison with the Town Council, designing out crime, Members also mentioned crime outside the town Centre, including burglary, knife crime, dangerous driving and car theft.

The Mayor thanked PCs Gunn and Reilly for their presentation and for taking the time to come to the meeting.

58. Kidderminster Business Improvement District (BID) - ballot and business plan 2025-2030.

The Mayor welcomed to the meeting the Chairman of the BID board, Mr. Paul Long, and the BID Manager, Mr. James Barker, and invited them to address the Council on the BID and their Business Plan for 2025 to 2030.

Members asked about the impact of food fairs on local businesses, security and working with the Police Force, shop visits by the BID, empty shops, new business for the town and involvement/ consultation with all the levy payers.

There was concern at the lack of diversity on the BID Board and Mr. Long said that the Board members were volunteers but were working to address this issue.

Members had a particular concern that the BID sometimes failed to acknowledge the Town Council's contribution to events, such as the Christmas Lights switch on. Mr. Barker said that the Business Plan was draft and that this matter would be addressed.

Mr. Long welcomed the suggestion that the BID might organise events to promote the heritage and culture of Kidderminster.

The meeting acknowledged the challenges that the BID had to overcome, with the pandemic impacting on the newly formed organisation. Overall, the council acknowledged the benefits that the BID had brought to Kidderminster and congratulated them on their first 5 years in business.

RESOLVED: that the Council votes for a further 5-year term for Kidderminster Business Improvement District.

Councillor Daniel Round abstained.

The Mayor allowed a short break at this stage of the meeting.

Councillor Mary McDonnell left the meeting at 8.24 pm.

59. TOWN HALL UPDATE

The CEO referred to the update circulated to Members, which focussed on the Construction contract at the Town Hall.

He further advised members that the Town Hall Committee had approved the appointment of business consultants to advise on the best business model for the future Town Hall and the staff structure and resources required to support that model.

The Meeting received the Town Hall update.

60. ST. GEORGE'S PARK PADDLING POOL UPDATE.

The CEO told the meeting that funding bids had so far been unsuccessful. Councillor Bernadette Connor advised that Midcounties Coop, with whom she was involved, would be interested in supporting this project. The CEO would advise the Operational Services Manager to make contact in this regard.

The meeting received the update on this matter.

61. ASSET REGISTER

The Mayor referred to the email from the CEO, suggesting that for reasons of sensitive financial information that this matter should be deferred to the private section of the meeting.

RESOLVED: To deal with this item after the press and public had been excluded.

62. PUBLIC CONSULTATION

RESOLVED to approve the public consultation on the Council’s services, including the consultation plan and the finances required to deliver it

63. COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEWS

The meeting heard that the District Council was consulting on 2 Community Governance Reviews which directly impact Kidderminster Parish.

The meeting noted that this was an opportunity for the Town Council to address anomalies in the Parish boundary and look to have the boundary updated to reflect current settlement patterns.

The CEO had circulated details of the reviews and recommended how the Council might respond. The Mayor told the meeting that both the District Council and Kidderminster Foreign Parish Council had recommended that the Hollyfields Care Home should remain in Kidderminster Foreign Parish area.

RESOLVED:

- A) For the Kidderminster Foreign Review, To support the proposal that the Kidderminster Town Council boundary should include the Habberley Road development which should be transferred to the town
- B) For Wolverley and Cookley:
To call for redrawing of the boundary between Kidderminster and Wolverley & Cookley in two areas:
 - i. At Sion Hill, by bringing the site of the former school site into Kidderminster (Wildmoor Rd).
 - ii. Development on Stourbridge Road (Albrighton Drive & Bowdler Close) also to be brought into Kidderminster.
- C) To call on Wyre Forest District Council to carry out a community governance review to re-establish common ward boundaries with those used for WFDC in Kidderminster and to make other changes to Kidderminster’s boundary so that it includes Kittiwake Drive, the whole of the Woven Oaks development and the developed areas comprising Finepoint Way and Zortech Avenue.

64. Report of External Auditor on the financial year ended 31st March 2024.

The CEO advised the Council that he had received the report of the external auditors, PKF Littlejohn, on our accounts and annual return for 2023-2024. Following this, the Council had published notice of the completion of the audit.

The CEO had circulated his report on the issues arising in the report.

RESOLVED: To receive the report and to note the actions which officers are taking to address the issues raised in the report.

The CEO said that he would update the Finance and Overview Committee on progress being made and report on these matters when presenting the Annual Governance return in June 2025.

65. BUDGET 25-26

The CEO circulated a timetable for the preparation of next year's budget, so that all members would be aware of the schedule and the process and how they could contribute to next year's budget.

Members would be invited to submit suggestions for the Vision and Budget and responses should be back to the CEO by Sunday the 3rd November.

66. DELIVERY OF AN ENERGY & RESOURCE PARK NEAR KIDDERMINSTER

The Mayor told the meeting that Power generation Midlands had received planning consent for an Energy Centre and a plastics Recovery plant in Kidderminster and the Company was setting up a Community Liaison Group to

“provide a two-way dialogue between PGM and the local community during the construction and operation of the Energy & Resource Park.

Regular meetings will encourage discussion and allow parties, such as elected representatives and local residents, to raise issues with PGM and provide feedback as the project progresses”.

Terms of reference and details of membership were circulated by the CEO. The members would be drawn from:

- the Company itself,
- their communication agents,
- an officer from the County Council
- 2 Members from the County Council
- 2 Members from the District Council (1 representative Foley Park & Hoobrook and 1 representative Mitton, and
- 1 each from Kidderminster and Stourport Town Councils.

The Mayor invited nominations for a representative from the Council.

RESOLVED: That Councillor Doug Hine be appointed to represent the Council on the Community Liaison Group to be set up by Power generation Midlands

67. COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The minutes of the Committee meetings held since the June meeting of the Council have been sent to Members and published on the Council's website:

- The Planning Committee meetings held on 27th June, 30th July, 27th August and the 30th September, chaired by Councillor Doug Hine

- The Town Hall Committee on the 9th September was also chaired by Councillor Doug Hine, Deputy Chair.
- The Events Committee on the 11th September, chaired by Councillor Mary Rayner.
- The Operational Services Committee held on 26th September chaired by Councillor Liam Carroll
- The Finance & Overview Committee meeting held on 10th October chaired by Councillor Steve Hollands
- The Staffing Committee meeting held on 16th October chaired by Councillor Helen Dyke

Councillor Dyke told the meeting that the Staffing Committee had confirmed that the CEO had satisfactorily completed his probation period and the Council thanked him for his work so far with the Council.

68. FULL COUNCIL FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2024-25

The Mayor presented the Forward Programme and invited members to comment or propose any additions for future meetings.

It was noted that the Council had declared a Climate Emergency in 2021 and asked that this matter be put on the agenda for the January meeting.

69. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

The remaining items on our agenda contain confidential information, one of a financial nature and the other personal information. It is therefore recommended that the press and members of the public be excluded from these discussions.

Resolved: To exclude the public and the press from the remaining items of business.

70. ASSET REGISTER

The Council noted that both the internal and external auditors had raised concerns about this matter.

The CEO updated the Council on the challenges that officers faced and the progress in drafting the Register.

RESOLVED: To approve the draft Asset Register and to authorise the CEO to obtain valuations for insurance purposes on the assets, as indicated on the Register.

71. Flexible working request

The CEO has requested that the Council amend his contract to allow him to work his contracted hours in 4 days instead of 5, for the period 28th October to 30 April 2025.

RESOLVED: to approve the temporary amendment to the CEO's contract of employment to enable the CEO to work his contracted 37 hours per week over 4 days per week, as set out above, from 28th October 2024 to 30th April 2025, in accordance with the following arrangement:

- 3 days a week, work at Wyre Forest House, from 8.00am to 6pm, with 1 hour break time: 9 hours work per day, for 3 days = 27 hours.
- 1 day per week, work from home, 7.30 am to 6.30 pm, 1 hour break time: 10 hours
- Total: 37 hours.

The Meeting concluded at 9.11 pm.

Signed: _____
Town Mayor

Date: _____