



**MINUTES OF THE ALCESTER TOWN COUNCIL MEETING  
HELD ON TUESDAY 4<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2022  
AT THE ERIC PAYNE COMMUNITY CENTRE, ALCESTER.**

**Present**

Councillors K Cargill (Mayor), M Cargill, M Bowe, C Neal-Sturgess, A Foster, E Wilson, G Forman, V Blake, W Mills, D Henderson and L Pusey

**In attendance** Mrs V Lowe, Town Clerk, Cllr Piers Daniell (County Councillor) and Cllr S Juned (District Councillor).

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT DISCRETION OF MAYOR**

There was no public participation.

**District and County Councillors' Reports**

Cllr P Daniell (County Councillor) reported that the speed gun was with the police for maintenance. Cllr Foster pointed out that there were a number of speedwatch volunteers already trained in Alcester and Cllr Daniell asked for their details to be passed on to him.

Cllr Daniell has leafletted shops in the High Street regarding the Warwickshire Retail Crime Initiative which he hopes to start in Alcester to enable shops, businesses and the police to connect more effectively.

Cllr Daniell confirmed that he had a delegated budget for minor highways work and asked Councillors to contact him with suggested improvement work.

In response to a question submitted in advance, Cllr Daniell updated Councillors on the entry into the Platinum Jubilee Civic Honours Competition. He confirmed that the entry form was now on the Town Council website. He explained that if Alcester were fortunate enough to be chosen to become a new city, it would be an honour from Her Majesty the Queen but would not result in any changes to the essence of the town. Cllr Mills suggested that perhaps residents should have been consulted in advance to avoid misunderstanding.

Cllr S Juned (Ward Member for Alcester Town) reported that she had been contacted regarding the repositioning of the 30-mph speed limit sign on Birmingham Road. Some residents had been advised in 2017 that the sign would be relocated as part of the Allimore Lane development. Initial indications from SDC were that there was no such planning condition, and this would therefore need a Traffic Regulation Order in order to be progressed. Cllr Juned is pursuing this.

Cllr Juned reported that she was concerned about the lack of progress on repairs to the Three Tuns public house following the fire in April 2021. She was particularly worried that the structure was not being protected from the weather and she had taken this up with SDC Planning Enforcement.

Cllr Juned reported that residents of Moorfield Road had raised concerns regarding the poor signage which meant that delivery drivers could not find their houses along the two separate spurs of the road. SDC are investigating options.

M Cargill (Ward Member for Alcester and Rural) reported that SDC and WDC had both passed resolutions on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2021 to merge the authorities and a formal letter had been sent to the Secretary of State on the following day.



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**1. Apologies**

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr E Randle. No apologies were received from Cllr K Greenaway. The Mayor noted that Cllr Hempell had resigned as a Town Councillor on the day of the meeting.

**2. Minutes of Council Meetings**

The Mayor asked Councillors to consider for approval the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> December 2021. They were proposed to be accepted by Cllr M Cargill, seconded by Cllr Pusey and approved by Council; they were then signed by the Mayor.

**3. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest on the agenda items.

**4. Mayor's Report**

The Mayor confirmed that regrettably Cllr Hempell had resigned as a Town Councillor. She thanked him for his work as a Councillor particularly on the Planning Committee.

The Mayor reported that she had attended the Town Christmas carol concert on 19<sup>th</sup> December and had read the lesson. She had also been pleased to attend the pantomime "Jack and the Beanstalk" at the newly opened Whitnash Civic Centre on 28<sup>th</sup> December as a guest of the Whitnash Town Council.

**5. Presidium**

In the Mayor's absence, the Presidium meeting had been chaired by Cllr Forman. Cllr Forman confirmed that she was satisfied Committee members approved the minutes from the preceding month, which were then signed.

**5.1 Public Works Loan Board**

Cllr Bowe made a presentation to Councillors on the proposition from Presidium that the Town Council should take out a loan to purchase a new heating system for the Greig Hall.

Cllr Bowe explained that the Town Council had taken on a 125-year lease of the Hall and had agreed to proceed with the renovation work to put the building in a safe and sound condition to operate. The most significant items to be dealt with were the roof, the electrics and the heating system. There was however a long list of other tasks which needed to be completed before opening.

The business case supplied in advance to Councillors confirmed that £250,000 had been secured for the renovation work but this was still some £100,000 short of the target, with the deficit largely relating to the cost of a new heating system. Without a heating system the Hall would only be able to operate in the summer months. Cllr Bowe explained that due to the Covid pandemic, grants were very hard to source at the current time and therefore Presidium had agreed that a loan from the Public Works Loan Board was the only solution to enable the project to maintain its impetus and not to have to close the Greig Hall during Winter months until further funds were raised.

There were a number of questions from Councillors.

In response to a question from Cllr Wilson, Cllr Bowe explained that the list of works identified in the business plan was not all-inclusive and there were a number of significant items which would be still outstanding, including the



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upgrade of the kitchen. He explained that when ATC took on the lease of the building, the original estimate from the surveyor for renovation work to bring the building up to 21<sup>st</sup> century standards was some £750,000 but this was deemed unaffordable, and it had been agreed that a more basic schedule of essential works would be undertaken at this stage. Once the building was opened, further funds would be raised to finance outstanding items such as the kitchen. It was agreed that the Town Clerk would post a "Frequently Asked Questions" type document on the website to explain this.

It was agreed that an "in person" public consultation meeting would not be possible within the current Covid restrictions, and that the Town Clerk would therefore consult residents using posters, social media and email. Cllr Mills suggested that the consultation papers should be sent to contacts for community groups and societies with a request to distribute them to members. Cllr Foster reminded Councillors that the Greig Hall project was not without risk, namely lack of buy-in from the public, car parking and lack of grant funding. Cllr Bowe acknowledged these risks but explained that the decision to proceed with the project had already been taken and that the loan was required if the project were to continue on the current schedule.

Cllr M Cargill confirmed his support for the proposal. He agreed that it was important that the correct message was sent out using a FAQ document as proposed.

Cllr Neal-Sturgess raised the issue of whether the new Greig Hall CIO should take responsibility for the loan repayments once it was running the Greig Hall. The Town Clerk explained that the loan repayments would remain the responsibility of the Town Council, but that Councillors could seek to negotiate with the CIO regarding a donation equivalent to the loan payments as part of any future lease agreements.

Following the conclusion of discussions, Cllr Bowe proposed that Council pass proposition numbered 5.1 on the agenda which had the following elements:

- a. "That a consultation exercise is undertaken in January 2022 to consult residents on the proposal to borrow £100,000 from the Public Works Loan Board to finance the installation of a heating system in the Greig Hall and to increase the precept to cover the cost of loan repayments."
- b. "That the Town Clerk is requested to report to Presidium by email on the outcome of the consultation."
- c. "Subject to Presidium approving the response to the consultation, that the Town Council seeks authority from the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to borrow £100,000 from the Public Works Loan Board to finance the installation of a heating system in the Greig Hall. This loan will be for a borrowing term of 10 years. The loan will be annuity based at a fixed rate of interest and annual loan repayments will be in the region of £11,000. It is intended to increase the precept by £11,000 per annum for the purposes of loan repayment."
- d. "That if authority is received from the Secretary of State, the Town Clerk is authorised to make an application to the Public Works Loan Board for the loan."



**MINUTES OF THE ALCESTER TOWN COUNCIL MEETING  
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- e. "That the Town Clerk is authorised to vary the application in consultation with Presidium to reflect any changes in interest rates before borrowing approval is confirmed."

This proposition was seconded by Cllr Neal-Sturgess and after a vote, carried unanimously by Council.

**5.2 Precept**

The budget for 2022-23 together with a briefing paper had been circulated by the Town Clerk in advance of the meeting. The Town Clerk presented these figures to Councillors which were approved.

There was a proposition numbered 5.2 on the agenda from Presidium:

"To agree a budget of £337,286 for the financial year 2022-23. Taking into account anticipated income of £30,750, to request a precept from Stratford-on-Avon District Council of £306,536 for the year 2022-23."

This was proposed by Cllr K Cargill, seconded by Cllr Foster, and carried unanimously by Council. The Town Clerk will submit the request to SDC.

**6. Update on Councillor vacancies**

The Town Clerk reported that she had been informed by the Elections Officer at SDC that enough requests for an election had been received for the vacancies on the Council created by the resignations of Cllr Tim Forman and Cllr Kirsten Forbes, to be decided by an election. A notice of election was expected later in the week. If more candidates than vacancies are nominated, a poll will be held on Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> February 2022. This will be at a cost to the Council of approximately £4000.

The Town Clerk had received notification of the resignation of Cllr Hempell on the day of the meeting and will post the notice of vacancy as soon as possible. She will contact SDC regarding the implications of another vacancy at this stage.

**7. Community Care Committee**

There was no Committee meeting in December.

**8. Community Facilities Committee**

There was no Committee meeting in December.

**9. Planning Committee**

Cllr Bowe confirmed that he was satisfied Committee members approved the minutes from the preceding month, which were then signed. Cllr Bowe gave a summary of the applications considered by the Committee at its two meetings during December. There were no propositions from the Committee.

**10. Greig Working Group**

There was no further update from Cllr M Cargill as pending issues had been discussed during item 5.1 on the agenda.

**11. Town Council Representatives**

There was one nominee, Cllr Mills, for the vacant position on United Charities. Cllr Mills was duly appointed.

There was one nominee for the vacant position on Church Street Property Trust, namely Cllr M Cargill. Cllr Cargill was duly appointed.

The Town Clerk will notify both trusts accordingly.

There were no reports from representatives.



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**12. Payment of Accounts**

The Town Clerk presented the Payment of Accounts for the preceding month. The accounts were proposed to be approved by Cllr Neal-Sturgess, seconded by Cllr Forman and carried by Council.

**13. Correspondence**

Email correspondence received by the Clerk was taken as read.

**14. Dates of future meetings**

Planning Committee - Monday 10<sup>th</sup> January 2022 at 7 pm by Zoom

Community Care Committee – no meeting in January

Community Facilities Committee – Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> January 2022 at 7 pm by Zoom

Presidium Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> January 2022 at 7 pm by Zoom

Full Council Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> February 2022 at 7 pm at EPCC

*(Note – meeting venues confirmed by Town Clerk after the meeting to reflect current Covid restrictions. All Committees will meet as advisory committees only whilst using Zoom.)*

The Mayor closed the meeting.